THE WIFE OF A VAIN MAN

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THE WIFE OF A VAIN MAN.

BY

MARIE SOPHIE SCHWARTZ.

Translated from the Swedish,

BY

SELMA BORG AND MARIE A. BROWN.

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THE WIFE OF A VAIN MAN.

THE BETROTHED.

THE Spring sun shone clear and glorious upon Holmvik, the stately domain belonging to Count Arthur Rubens. Two young girls stood on the balcony, one about nineteen, the other sixteen years of age, and were looking down the avenue. It was plain to perceive that they expected some one.

"Admit, Ellen, that it is very strange that they stay so long at church," said Fröken* Ebba Rubens, the Count's daughter.

"Yes, it is past three o'clock," replied Ellen Kahn, a daughter of Countess Rubens's friend, Fru Kahn, who at her death had confided the daughter and her property to the care of the Count and Countess. Count Rubens was consequently the young girl's guardian.

"Do you think that anything has happened to them? Perhaps the horses have run away!" exclaimed Ebba, with childish anxiety.

"O no, Aunt and Uncle have probably gone up to Löda. Hark! do you hear? They are coming now!" Ellen's cheeks glowed when Ebba exclaimed, —

"Yes, there they are turning into the avenue, and Evert of Ochard rides beside the carriage."

Ebba tripped away light as a bird to meet them; but Ellen remained on the balcony, with her gaze directed toward the advancing carriage, at the left side of which a young man was riding. The roses came and went on her cheeks.

* Aristocratic title for "Miss."

Before we go further we ought to describe in a few words our heroine's appearance. Ellen was tall, with a frame at once slight and yet luxuriant. It might be said that the waist was too small for the full bosom, and the well-rounded shoulders made a strong contrast to the almost humble, swan-like way in which she carried herself. One would have expected this well-developed chest to have a neck supporting the seat of thought with queenly confidence. As it was, the young girl resembled a straight and slender tree, whose rich crown bent beneath the weight of its foliage. When the look fell on Ellen's brow, it seemed natural that the neck should not be able to support the full weight of this broad, high, and dreamy forehead that rested so musingly over a pair of large deep blue eyes, — eyes which overspread the whole face with their clear heaven. The nose was fine and slightly arched, the mouth small and seriously closed, but when it sometimes opened with a smile it revealed two rows of snow-white teeth. The complexion was pale, yet it did not have the transparent whiteness that is peculiar to blondes, but seemed firm and soft as velvet. Her hair was dark brown, almost black, rich, smooth, and lustrous. The whole could undeniably receive the name of beautiful, but there was a shadow resting over it which took away the youthful bloom and radiance that is wont to characterize girls of her age. It was as when a cloud intercepts the sun; one sees its rays break forth, but yet the cloud casts its shadow

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over the landscape. So with Ellen; one fancied that such a cloud obscured all the life and fire which ought to have beamed from these eyes, now smiling with so mild and thoughtful an expression. Sometimes it seemed as though the young girl's soul yet slumbered, and as if she had not awakened to the full consciousness of the powers that dwelt within her. It was life, feeling, and emotion that were wanting in her features, and this deficiency often gave them something expressionless and monotonous; for one always found there the same seriousness, the same thoughtfulness, the same gentle smile, but never any vivacity.

When the Count's carriage stopped beneath the balcony, and the rider swung himself from his horse to offer the Countess his arm and conduct her up the steps, Ellen went into the saloon. She had entered it with a certain slowness, as if irresolute; but when the Countess was seen at the door, she hastened gladly towards her, saying with her mild, serious smile, —

"How long you stayed, Aunt!"

Countess Emy Rubens, a stately, fine-looking woman of about forty, with a well-preserved beauty and a proud, noble bearing, embraced the young girl lovingly.

"We were detained by the Kerners. But here I stand and bar the way to one who is extremely impatient to see you again after a separation of three whole days."

"An eternity for a lover," added Count Rubens, who also entered, followed by Ebba and a twelve-year-old heir to his name.

Ellen hastened to greet the Count, and allowed the young man to stand there waiting. Finally she offered him her hand with downcast eyes and a deep color in her cheeks.

Justice Evert of Oehard had been betrothed to Ellen three months. It was considered, and rightly, as a marriage of love, at least on the young girl's side, for the Justice was without property.

The son of an old medical counsellor with four children, Evert had no prospects of an inheritance. Ellen, on the contrary, was a very wealthy girl, and even at the age of seventeen could have chosen a husband from some of the higher families; but the noble suitors did not seem to please the young girl, while Evert, on the other hand, had awakened her interest at their first meeting, which occurred at Count Rubens's in Stockholm a year and a half before.

The Justice's father had been Count Rubens's family physician for more than thirty years, and the son was therefore treated with especial favor by Count Arthur, who invited him to spend the summer at Holmvik. The daily intercourse did not diminish her fancy for Evert, and when the family again passed the winter in the capital, no one doubted that the Justice would be her choice. Their betrothal was celebrated in the month of March, so that Ellen returned to Holmvik as a *fiancée*.

The Justice had been away in the neighborhood for two or three days, and now, after this long separation, returned to Holmvik with the noble family.

Countess Emy had observed Ellen when the young lover greeted his betrothed, and a shadow passed over her face when she sought in vain for a trace of lively joy in her daughter's calm features. Emy turned away and sighed.

"Ah, Ellen," whispered Evert, "it looks as if you did not feel the pain of this short and yet long absence as much as I."

"And why do you think so?"

"With a heart beating with impatience have I been compelled to wait for a greeting from you whom I love so deeply."

"Forgive me!" Ellen offered him her

brow to kiss, "but do not doubt my affection or the warmth of my feelings, even if my manner seems cold. It is a peculiarity with me never to clothe what I feel in words."

"Not even to give your glance an expression of what your heart experiences." One could tell by his voice that he felt dissatisfied.

"I do not know what my eyes say; I only know what my heart feels."

"And you are convinced that this heart loves me?"

"Can you doubt it?"

Evert's answer failed to come, for the announcement of dinner left no time for it. He hastened to conduct the Countess to the table.

In the afternoon the whole family were assembled in the stately pavilion, the glass doors of which were open, and they sat in a saloon filled with the fragrance of flowers, while the glorious summer breeze streamed through it, diffusing a balmy exhalation from the blooming lindens. Through an opening in the park, far in the distance, the blue boundless ocean could be seen.

Ebba played a wild galop on the piano. Emy was conversing with the Justice in a low tone, and Ellen sat in an easy-chair, with her gaze directed towards the sea. Her whole appearance indicated complete abstraction. She seemed to have forgotten everything around her and to be absorbed in dreams.

"I fear," said Countess Emy to the Justice, "that a longer study of Ellen's character and peculiarities is required than that afforded by a six months' engagement, if you would not risk both her future and your own; therefore I consider it wisest for you to postpone your marriage another year."

"Is it Ellen's cause that you are now pleading? Is it she who desires this postponement?" asked Evert, in a somewhat resentful voice.

"No, my friend. Had Ellen desired to postpone your union, she would have told you so herself, without taking the roundabout way of asking me to do it. There again is a proof that you do not know your betrothed, when you do not even comprehend the most prominent trait in her character, namely, her uncommon frankness."

"In truth I cannot think that you are right; for to me Ellen appears reserved, often impossible to comprehend."

"But say, have you ever heard an untrue word pass those serious lips? Are not all her answers so frank that one sometimes becomes confused?"

"That I admit, so much the more as it was just this which captivated me; but if I now went to Ellen and asked her, 'What are you thinking of?' what do you imagine she would answer?"

"She would give you her hand, smile and say, "Forgive me, but it is impossible for me to explain my thoughts to you.'"

"Yes, that would certainly be her reply. But what then is she thinking of? It is not of me at least; not of me, whom she says she loves, and who adores her. What then can it be? When we love, the object of our love is also the object of all our thoughts, dreams, and feelings."

"You are right, and therefore I say, Ellen is an enigma which you need time to solve, and before you solve it you ought not to unite yourself to her indissolubly."

"No, Aunt, when Ellen becomes my wife, then is the enigma solved, and these vague reveries will vanish before the mate's love."

Company was now announced, and the next moment Count Oscar Kerner and the Countess Sappho entered. The appearance of both indicated peace and happiness. After them came Fröken Alma

Kerner, their daughter, aged fifteen, accompanied by a young man of about twenty-eight and a Lieutenant Henrico. They were welcomed in the heartiest manner, and Count Oscar introduced the young man to Emy.

"Allow me, dear Emy," said he, "to make you acquainted with my cousin, Count Uno Kerner, the son of my uncle, the envoy to Spain. Born and brought up in that country, he has now for the first time seen his fatherland. He is thus to be regarded more as a Spaniard than a Swede, especially as his mother was Spanish."

Emy and Arthur bade the young man a cordial welcome in French, but Count Uno replied in Swedish, —

"My father has preserved too lively a love for the soil of his forefathers to allow his son to grow up as a stranger to the land which he will always regard and love as his fatherland, and at this moment I feel doubly proud of it when I stand in the midst of my noble relatives."

Emy presented to him the Justice, Ellen, and her children; Uno's glance tarried a second on Ellen, and then rested upon Ebba's fresh and animated face, where joy and innocence beamed in every feature. The maiden of sixteen was a beautiful and living image of Spring.

In a short time Baron G——s arrived with a whole troop of young people, beside Pastor Wendborg with his wife and two sons.

Ellen, who was quite hastily snatched from her dreams, was now obliged, as the eldest, to be the hostess to the youthful portion, assisted by Ebba and the Justice.

The young people had been dancing, and now went out doors to rest and devise some games.

The Justice proposed one which consisted in each person's being presented with a flower, a word, or any article, and all those who received anything were to recite something appropriate or tell a story. Ebba went around and whispered to those participating in the game the name of the object which she gave them. When they had each received something, the first one, who was Countess Kerner, mentioned what had been bestowed upon her, namely, a white rose, and then added a very neat verse over it. So it went around the circle, and each one had given a more or less appropriate motto for what they had obtained. It now became Count Uno's turn.

"I received the words, 'my fatherland,'" whereupon he added a verse.

Ellen came last. The young girl had sat absorbed in thought the whole time, not following the course of the game, until Ebba cried: "Well, Ellen, what have you to say about your 'memory.'" Ellen rose with a completely absent look, and slowly stroked away her hair; then she went to Countess Emy. With a strangely sweet and melodious voice she improvised a little poem over the word. It was as if the beautiful poetic words had floated over her lips without her being aware of it. The wild mirth which had greeted all previous verses was stilled, and they listened, mute and surprised. The revelation was so rare, that most of the company took for granted that Ellen had recited a poem learned by rote; but the more clear-sighted perceived plainly that the words issued from her own heart, for they were addressed to Emy and related to the sweet memories of Ellen's childhood and the mother she had lost.

When she ceased, she remained before Emy with the dreamy gaze fastened upon her, and completely unmindful of the fact that she was in the midst of so many people.

"Thanks, my child," said Emy gently, and rising she pressed a kiss upon her foster-daughter's brow. The Countess's words broke the silence, and Ellen soon saw herself surrounded and overwhelmed

with praise from all sides. The sound of it freed her from the spell under which her soul had been bound. She blushed and bent down her head with such a shy motion, that one saw plainly how much she desired to escape all this attention.

Emy, who perceived Ellen's embarrassment, and knew full well the peculiarity of her disposition, hastened to turn the attention from her by proposing a walk. During the promenade Count Uno had offered Emy his arm and asked, —

"Were the verses which the young lady recited composed by herself for the occasion or by some one else?"

"They were not composed at all," replied Emy, smiling. "Ellen has the fortune, or misfortune, whichever you will, of being an improvisatrice. This comes from an over-excited fancy, which I try to counteract, but cannot succeed in overcoming."

"It is a singular condition, which one seldom finds, except with the fiery people of the South. But allow me to make an objection: a person improvises who receives a theme quite unexpectedly and immediately composes a poem upon it."

"Well, I fancy that Ellen did something similar to this just now."

"In a certain sense, yes; but she had, however, nearly half an hour in which to think out these four or five verses."

"If I did not make it a rule to give as little nourishment and exercise as possible to this natural proclivity of Ellen's, I would ask you, my cousin, to give her a subject, and you would with surprise hear her improvise upon it."

"Ah! make an exception and allow me to witness a marvel which I have certainly heard spoken of, but never believed in."

"Not this evening. I should not be able to prevail upon her to do it, surrounded by all these wondering eyes."

"But she improvised awhile ago."

"Ah, my cousin, then she had forgotten that there were several here besides herself and me. You doubt. If you, like me, had known this singular nature from childhood, you would doubt no longer. I promise that you shall have a proof of her talent to-morrow; for I presume you will stay with us a few days with the Kerners, as they promised."

All the company had departed, with the exception of the Kerners, who had now gone to their rooms. Emy and Ellen were alone in the saloon.

The latter had thrown her arms around the Countess's neck and leaned her head against hers.

"Ellen, you are unhappy this evening."

"Yes! a peculiar disquietude comes over me when I forget myself as I have done this evening, and allow fancy to carry me away without being able to restrain my transport."

"And I believed that this transport made you happy."

"For the moment, yes; but afterwards, afterwards I stand there so alone, and I feel such a void in my heart."

"A void in your heart, now when you love?"

"Ah, yes; who besides you understands Ellen? Why am I not like others at my age?" Ellen sighed.

"Because God has at once endowed you more richly and more poorly than others. But do you know, my child, I am afraid that your fancy, not your heart, loves Evert. Consider, Ellen, if you should one day discover that you had mistaken your feeling for him, and you were then forever bound to a man whom you did not love."

"I have examined my heart, and this examination has shown me that I am attached to Evert with a true and sincere affection."

"Affection?" repeated Emy.

"Yes, that is the right word. I have never been able to comprehend those

violent impressions, those surging feelings which are called love. That which attaches me to Evert is, as I have just said, a true and deep affection. Believe me, my fancy has usurped too large a place in my soul for my heart to entertain any powerful passion. Besides, the education which you and my mother have given me has been calculated to repress all extremes. In the calm circle in which I have lived there has been nothing to fire my feelings. How pitiable should I not be if passion had gained a foothold in my breast and become the leader of my imagination!"

"God grant, Ellen, that you now judge yourself rightly, and that the liveliness of feeling which your mother and I tried to abate may not again be awakened in your breast."

"No, you have placed a watchman over my passions that will always control and direct them, and which will make me bear the trials that are sent me with courage and trust; this watchman is the fear of God."

Emy embraced the young girl with emotion and whispered, —

"Thanks, my Ellen for these words."

The next morning Ebba came in to Ellen while she was dressing.

"Well, how do you like Count Uno?" inquired Ebba. "I had no chance to speak to you last night, and I could scarcely go to sleep, only because you had not told me what you thought of him."

"How childish you are, Ebba! To think of such trifles when you go to sleep!"

"Ah, I know well enough what you mean to say. You think that I forgot to say my prayers. No, certainly not; but you see, Ellen, I never know what I ought to think of a person until you have told me your opinion."

"And yet we so often think differently."

"That comes from the fact that you think more of what is serious, even tiresome, and I of what is cheerful and pleasant; but still, I can never get a definite idea of a person before I know your impressions. Now tell me, what do you think of his appearance?"

"Not much. I could almost say that he is ugly."

"Yes, indeed, dreadfully ugly."

"Now you go to the extreme, Ebba," returned Ellen, smiling.

"Dear me, is it an extreme to call a person ugly who has copper-colored skin and blue-black hair, a nose hooked like a bird's bill, a mouth which ought to be called 'Ginungagap' —"

"But with beautiful teeth and a pleasant smile."

"And eyes like portholes with cannons' mouths in them."

"The eyes are black, intelligent, and mild."

"Yes beautiful! to me he seems like a negro."

"A negro with an aquiline nose?"

"Well, why not? have n't negroes the right to have aquiline noses? I would just like to know what should hinder them. But we will not talk any more about his looks, for if I go on, then," — Ebba began to laugh, — "then you will lecture me and say, 'Good God, Ebba, how foolish you are!'"

"That might all happen," said Ellen, also laughing.

"Yes, it is pretty certain. But we ought not to judge people by their appearance," added Ebba, quite seriously; "no one is to blame for being ugly, and I am real wicked to laugh at those who are."

"Therefore we will speak no more about the Count's appearance."

"No, as we cannot make him any handsomer. But it is so pleasant to see those who are beautiful. O, how I

love to look at Alma Kerner. She is so lovely!" said Ebba, clapping her hands with delight.

"And good and amiable."

"Yes, she is not such a giddy pate as I. But you like me for all that?" Ebba leaned her head to one side and looked at Ellen.

"Very, very much."

"More than your betrothed?"

"Not more, but as much."

"Good! but now tell me how did that ugly Uno appear to you?"

"It seemed to me that he had an agreeable manner, spoke well, and looked good."

"I suppose you are right; but you see I don't like him at all. Yes, do you know, Ellen, I was real angry with him, and had such bad feelings when I went to bed, that I was fairly afraid of myself."

"But for what cause?"

"I know well enough."

"Then tell me what it is."

"Well, Ellen, he thought that you recited a piece when you improvised, and it provoked me, and then I heard him say to Henrico that you had a soulless expression. Fie! how wicked the person must be who could speak so of you! To be soulless is not to be good; and you, you are certainly good if any one is."

"Ah, Ebba darling, now your feelings are running away with you again; you are much more wicked in getting angry with him than he is in simply expressing his opinion about a person's looks." Ellen had not time to say more, for the door opened and a curly brown head peeped in, while a sweet, glad voice inquired, —

"May I come in?"

"Certainly, Alma," cried the two girls, and Alma Kerner entered.

In the afternoon the whole company were assembled in the pavilion. Ebba, Alma, and young Arthur had made a pilgrimage up to the doves. The Justice was talking with Counts Kerner and Rubens. Ellen was helping Aunt Sappho to start a new pattern in crochet, while Henrico held a skein of worsted for Countess Emy.

"So, Count, you consider the ability to improvise mythical," said the Justice.

"I confess that I doubt this capacity, for even the greatest genius requires reflection to be able to link his thoughts together in rhyme and metre."

"And yet," joined in Arthur, "I can immediately produce a proof that such an ability exists."

"Yes, *my* betrothed possesses that kind of genius," said the Justice with animation.

"Mademoiselle Kahn?" inquired Uno.

"If we dared to ask Ellen, you would really be astonished," said Count Oscar Kerner; "but perhaps Emy will not allow it?" added he as he turned to Arthur. Before the latter had time to reply, Uno said, —

"I obtained the Countess's promise yesterday to afford me a proof that would remove all my doubts."

Arthur went to Ellen, saying, —

"Improvise a little for us, my child; by so doing you will afford Uncle Oscar and me great pleasure."

Ellen looked at Emy, as if to ask her what answer she ought to give; but Emy smilingly nodded her consent. Then Ellen rose and said with a slight blush, —

"Upon what theme?"

"Count Uno has desired to be allowed to give you one."

Ellen looked at Uno, who regarded her with more curiosity than interest. Her willingness and composure excited his surprise. Uno approached the young girl and said with a smile, —

"Pardon the boldness to which my curiosity leads me; but I should be extremely indebted to you if you would deign to improvise some lines upon — *the doubter*."

Ellen bowed her head affirmatively, and closing her eyes she remained standing in this way some minutes; then she began, first with a slow and afterwards more animated voice, to recite in rhyme a description of the doubter's unhappiness, of the night which rests over his soul. Next she pictured everything that ought to speak to his heart, quicken his faith, and lead him to God. A tone of true poesy and glowing feeling prevailed in her representation, which charmed and impressed, so that she captivated her hearers and carried them with her either with or against their will.

Uno's gaze had not for an instant left Ellen's face, and it was singular to follow its changes. First it was suffused with a brilliant blush, and her eyes were fastened upon the Count without seeming to see him. Gradually they lighted up, the color disappeared, a complete paleness overspread her face, while her look, when she spoke of God's goodness and the greatness of his work, acquired an expression of actual inspiration. These marble-pale features then beamed with ecstasy and enthusiasm.

When Ellen came nearer the close her voice died away into a whisper, and she sank down upon a chair. All remained silent a moment. Sappho was the first who, with her natural liveliness, thanked her. At the sound of her voice Ellen rose again, and a fine color returned to her cheeks.

Count Uno advanced to her.

"To doubt now would be to doubt the manifold wonders of God, and such a doubter I am not. My gratitude can only be equalled by the admiration your genius awakens."

The Justice swam in an ocean of delight at all the praise that was lavished upon his betrothed.

Later in the evening they conversed about various original traits of character. Uno said, —

"Singularly enough, the original does not strike me. I do not love those who deviate from the usual measure of human perfection. They appear to me, these originals, like trees which, instead of growing straight as nature intended, take a gnarled and crooked form."

"This may hold good with originals in character, but not with original geniuses," said Sappho. "Before genius we must always bend with admiration."

"Excuse me, dear Sappho, if I do not perfectly agree with you," replied Uno. "Genius certainly impresses my intellect, but not my heart, for persons of genius are just those who lack heart. What do domestic joys signify to them, that quiet and beautiful happiness which springs up from the soil of the heart? What is love itself to them? Only a bit of finery with which they adorn their genius, not a feeling indispensable to their life. Is the poet as noble a person, as tender and faithful a mate, as he is a skilful delineator of all that is beautiful and adorable in the human heart? No. His fancy depicts what his soul never felt. And the learned genius, who analyzes our passions, who dissects our thoughts and anatomizes all the workings of the soul, is he anything but a cold inquirer who is so absorbed in his learned investigations that his heart has dried up and is not able to beat for his fellow-beings, either with friendship or compassion? Genius breeds pride, pride egotism, and egotism kills all true feeling. I have far greater admiration for those who are endowed with goodness of soul, with warmth and fire of heart, even if they are destitute of genius. The poet is to me a shining meteor and nothing else."

"My friend, you have nearly stifled me with your arguments," exclaimed Sappho, "and I am burning with impatience to tell you that you make a cruel mistake; for it is just this exuberance and ardor of feeling which fosters the poet; love for humanity and enlightenment produces the learned man. And

it is lack of egotism that makes him sacrifice life and health to his researches, in order to benefit his contemporaries and posterity. I go so far as to assert that the faults and mistakes in life of both the learned and poetic geniuses proceed just from too much heart. There is no genius without feeling, for then it has ceased to be genius. What do we mean by this word, if not a richly endowed soul?"

"Certainly; but we mean by it only intellectual superiority. Mirabeau was no less a genius for being a volatile and dissolute person; but neither does genius excuse these failings. And for this reason I love moral superiority more, and would rather kneel before the good than before the gifted."

"Acknowledge at least that you are transported by what is gifted and beautiful?"

"Yes, if it is combined with virtue and goodness; otherwise it lacks all value for me."

"Take care, Uno," said Sappho, laughing, "you are now trying to be original yourself."

"Not at all. A proof of this is that that picture charms and delights me," said he in a whisper, pointing to Ebba and Alma, who were playing ball; "while my heart remained cold and insensible to all the beautiful things uttered by the young improvisatrice."

"Hush!" said Sappho, and looked around her, but, as she did not see Ellen, she added: "But do you know that Ellen herself is a proof that goodness of heart accompanies genius, for I know no one so good, so merciful to her kind, as she."

"Possibly; but this goodness is a result of ideality, not of an innate need of being good. Regard her face closely, and you will be astonished at the coldness in it. It has a passive mildness, an empty, absent expression; in a word, it indicates a soul that is swayed by its dreams, not by its feelings, and which looks down with a spiritual pride upon all that generally gladdens youth. The girl is a genius, I admit; but her heart is dried up by an unrestrained imagination which makes her incapable of being happy herself or of spreading joy around her. Do you believe, Sappho, that her husband can be happy at the side of a being who possesses nothing in common with us others, but lives and idealizes in the kingdom of fancy? What domestic comfort can she produce, who will never be able to conceive of the felicity of domestic life? How inferior must not the love be which she bestows upon her husband, when her soul only dreams of what reality does not possess. No, this genius which charms and transports you, and which makes this Ellen a wonder to you, awakens with me only a painful impression, and every word of praise which I am compelled to accord her ability to improvise, excites my aversion. How much more ravishing would she not be if one saw in her the innocent vivacity of youth, instead of this genius continually striving for applause, concealed under dissembled modesty!"

While Uno was speaking, Ellen had entered without either he or Sappho being aware of it. She had approached the table at which Sappho was sitting to get a book that lay there, but stopped a moment unavoidably when she heard her name mentioned. Something extremely painful was felt within the young girl when she listened to Uno's severe judgment, and she took a step back in order to steal away without being observed by the speakers, when Count Arthur, who was on the other side of the room, but opposite to Ellen, exclaimed, —

"What is the matter with you, Ellen, you are so pale?"

At his words Uno and Sappho turned quickly, and Ellen stood behind them. When Uno looked at her, their eyes met. Poor Ellen's glance was so sorrowful that it made a painful impression upon the

Count. She turned her eyes from him immediately and directed them to Arthur.

"I am well, dear Uncle," said she. With this she took the book and intended to leave the saloon; but Sappho bade her stay and offered her hand kindly.

"Sing something for us," said she.

"Mademoiselle Kahn sings also?" asked Uno.

"Yes, but not this evening," replied Ellen, and now raised her lowered head.

"If I ask you, child, then you cannot say no," said Sappho heartily.

Ellen carried her hand to her lips with a charming motion, and answered smiling: "This evening I should say no, even if Aunt Emy asked me."

"The reason, my little Ellen?"

"We are too many."

"That is not an acceptable excuse, for you have never refused to sing for us before when we have been together so familiarly."

"That is true, but we were then not so many as this evening," said Ellen.

"My sweet child, there have been still more of us."

"Possibly, but at least not the same who are here now."

Sappho colored a little, but smiled. Uno had stood silent the whole time. Now he said, —

"There is one too many this evening, and on account of this one you will not sing. Am I not right, Mademoiselle Kahn?"

"Perfectly right."

"And who is the unhappy person?" asked Sappho, laughing.

"Yes, tell us who it is that you would like to exclude," said Uno, with an almost sarcastic smile, for he thought that the question would place Ellen in embarrassment.

"You, Count!" answered Ellen directly, but with a certain trembling in her voice.

"Good God, Ellen! what is that you say?" burst out the Justice. He had come in during the latter part of the conversation.

"The truth," said Ellen, as she left them. Sappho and Uno exchanged a glance. The Justice then found himself obliged to say to Uno, —

"You must not judge my betrothed too severely, Herr Count; her words sometimes sound strange, but she never means to wound. For the rest I shall immediately persuade her to sing, if the Countess and Count so desire."

"It is entirely unnecessary to try to excuse Ellen," said Sappho with spirit and a slight shade of *hauteur*. "She is such a superior girl that she is never guilty of anything which is not right."

"But —"

"You do not know the reason of Ellen's conduct; what use is it then to speak of it? I find her behavior perfectly right, and it has only increased my respect for her." Sappho rose, and Uno turned politely to the Justice, saying, —

"I assure you that the truth can never wound me, and I stand in debt to Mademoiselle Kahn for expressing it so freely." He then began to speak of indifferent matters, but a cloud of displeasure rested on the Justice's face.

When Sappho left Uno and the Justice she went to look up Ellen. She found her in the garden, sitting on a mossy bank, with her head leaning against a tree and her face bathed in tears.

"Why, Ellen, you are weeping?" exclaimed Sappho when she saw her.

"Yes, I am weeping, weeping from indignation and pain."

"Over what?"

"That any one should consider me affected. What gives Count Uno the right to so judge me? He does not know me, and yet he dares to cast a

shadow upon my character." Ellen looked at Sappho with flashing eyes. Her face was not soulless now, as one usually said of it.

"My child, he has not wished to cast any shadow upon your character; he has only expressed his views to me with regard to poetic temperaments in general. These views are false in themselves, and as far as you in particular are concerned entirely unjust."

"You wish to excuse him. Has he not said that I 'strove for applause'?"

"But as you do not, you can laugh at such an assertion," said Sappho, patting Ellen on the cheek.

"It seems to me as if this expression of his had made me worse; my heart is filled with bitterness and resentment over the injustice of his judgment, and at this moment I am not good."

"Not good?" Sappho smiled. "Would you actually wish to do him any harm?"

"No; but I would force him to acknowledge that he has judged me wrongly."

Emy and the Justice now approached them.

"What are you talking about? Ellen looks quite disturbed," said Emy.

"About Uno," answered Ellen.

"Then it does not surprise me that you are disturbed," replied Emy, smiling; "for Ochard has mentioned to me that you have been so frank as to declare that Uno was one person too many when you were to sing. Fie, fie, Ellen darling! this time you entirely forgot the claims of politeness."

"But not the claims of truth," said Sappho; "and as truth is worth considerably more than politeness, Ellen was right and you wrong to speak further of the matter, about which I besides immediately expressed my opinion." Something of Sappho's haughty tone was shadowed forth in these words; but as if she repented it she added jestingly, "And besides, it is not polite of you to give the lie to my judgment through an appeal to Emy."

"My gracious Lady, that was never my intention; I bow myself in the dust before your superiority."

"And then fall on your knees before Ellen and confess that you cruelly trespassed against her, when you — told tales." Sappho raised her finger threateningly.

The Justice laughingly bent his knee before his betrothed, who with a gentle smile gave him her hand.

The next day there was a little party at Holmvik. It was Ebba's sixteenth birthday, and all the young people in the neighborhood were invited to celebrate the occasion. Where young folks are to have a good time, there must be dancing, and they danced to their hearts' content. During one of the resting spells, Oscar Kerner said to Ellen, —

"Well, Ellen, will you not improvise some lines in Ebba's honor?"

Not far from Oscar stood Uno. At this question of the Count, he turned and looked at Ellen.

"No, dear Uncle, I cannot do it," answered she, blushing.

"It would certainly make Ebba very glad if you expressed your friendship for her in a few cordial words."

"Ebba knows full well how deeply I love her, and no words are needed to convince her of it."

"But you would afford us all a pleasure by so doing. Child, I beg you to do it." Oscar took Ellen's hand and looked at her kindly.

"If we were alone, I would instantly oblige you; not now."

Uno approached.

"If we should all join in the request, would you still say no?"

"Yes, most assuredly."

In a moment Ellen was surrounded by

a whole bevy, who in all possible tones entreated her to improvise; but Ellen remained inexorable.

The Justice whispered one warm prayer after another in her ear, but without success. Even Arthur and Emy begged the young girl to listen to these united prayers, but she persisted in her refusal, and finally hastened away. Evert followed her. When she came into Emy's cabinet, she turned round, —

"Is that you, Evert?" said she.

"Ellen, why this decided refusal, when you could so easily do what they ask of you and thereby make me happy?" said Evert, seizing her hand.

"Do *you* absolutely wish to hear me improvise?"

"What a question! I who begged you to do it so fervently."

"Very well, Evert, I promise to improvise as much as you wish to-morrow, when we are alone."

"Beloved Ellen, you must do it this evening. Ah! if you knew how my heart swells with pride and joy when they gather around you to render you their homage. If you could realize how happy this praise which is lavished upon you makes me, you would not deny me the enjoyment of seeing you the object of general admiration and of knowing that this distinguished girl is *my betrothed.* Ellen, I conjure you! show me your love by yielding to the entreaties that have been made you. Sacrifice for my sake the caprice which induced you to refuse them." Evert had fallen upon his knees before Ellen and covered her hands with kisses.

Ellen bent down to him, pressed her lips to his brow, and whispered, —

"Do not beg me, dear Evert, I cannot fulfil you prayer."

Evert remained yet a moment and continued to beseech her; but when Ellen still refused, he rose and said, —

"Ah! I see now how little you love me. What sort of a love is that which cannot even sacrifice a caprice for the beloved one?" And with this he left her.

Ellen let him go without trying to mollify him with a single word. She threw herself down in an easy-chair and buried her face in her hands.

This little scene had had two witnesses.

When Ellen left the room, Emy had gone another way in order to meet her in the cabinet and represent to her in some friendly words that she ought to comply with the general request. But she had stopped when she heard Evert and Ellen speaking, and the longer she listened the more astonished she became at Ellen's obstinacy, so little in accordance with the young girl's gentle and submissive disposition.

"What is it that can induce Ellen to be so stubborn, that she makes Evert both angry and troubled?" thought Emy. "She must certainly have some adequate reason for it, else she would not act so; but now I must return to the company and try to excuse her, for to attempt to persuade her is not likely to compensate for the effort." Emy returned to the saloon.

"Ah, I was just looking for you to ask you to become my *vis-à-vis* in the *française* which we are going to dance."

"With pleasure," answered Evert, and hastened again in to Ellen. An angry flush yet burned on his cheeks and his voice trembled as he said to her, —

"I suppose you will also refuse if I ask you to dance with me?"

Ellen replied pleasantly, —

"No, Evert, I certainly will not." With this she rose, wiped away her tears, and gave her hand to her betrothed.

"You are very good. I really did not expect so much compliance from you towards so insignificant a person as I am!"

"Why this scorn, Evert!"

"Scorn? My friend, the truth cannot be scorn; but let us leave off. The music has begun, and we ought not to

let the others wait while we exchange our tender feelings." Evert laughed derisively.

Ellen felt hurt by his words. She was filled with bitter feelings, and at this moment she lacked entirely the mildness and toleration which were the basis of her character. Cold, hard words trembled upon her lips, but she held them back with a violent effort. Never had Ellen been swayed by more disagreeable impressions, never had her mild and loving heart been filled with such passionate and violent emotions. She felt ready to weep over herself, so changed did she seem; but pride restrained her tears, and with flaming cheeks and an almost repellant expression in her face, she entered the dancing-hall. That this cold expression was not softened when she found that Uno was there opposite, that the sight of him did not have a calming effect upon the bitter feelings which governed her, can be easily perceived when one considers that his attack against her had called them forth.

During the whole dance Ellen's movements lacked the enchanting grace of coyness which usually distinguished her. She carried her head high. A touch of unsubdued pride revealed itself in all her motions. Not once did she fasten her eyes on the Count; and when he said some words to her during the dance, she bowed her head in response, but not a word passed her lips. When the dance was over and Evert led her to a seat, she said almost with temper, —

"Why did you not tell me that the Count was to be our *vis-à-vis?* If I had known that, I should not have danced."

"But, good God, Ellen! what ails you?" exclaimed Evert, looking at her with astonishment. He had never seen her like this.

"Ah! forgive me," whispered she, "I am very, very bad to-day; I feel it."

"Why should you not wish to dance when the Count was opposite to you?"

"Because — because it is hard for me to endure him!" stammered Ellen.

Emy had observed her foster-daughter, and in her heart made the same explanation as Evert: "Good God, what ails the girl?" She had never known Ellen to abandon herself to a bitter mood, never before seen this cross and irritable expression in her face, never this cold and arrogant pride.

Uno thought as he danced opposite her, —

"How genius can blind people! That woman passes for good and mild. Because she can paint beautiful and magnificent images with her fancy, one believes that she feels all that she utters in her ecstasy; and yet her heart is empty, cramped by all the littleness that clings to the most ordinary of all ordinary people. Stubborn from wounded self-love, neither love nor prayers can induce her to yield, because she has discovered that I do not admire her or believe her to be one of the world's wonders. No, these gifted persons are as deformed as a wagon with one large wheel and the other small. The result is that the wagon is not fit for use, and neither are these model people qualified for real life. They are ruled by self-love, and only self-love. No, give me my little relative Ebba, with her warm, childish heart and pure feelings. She enlivens the soul and warms the blood. Ah! happy he who can have such a treasure for a companion through life!"

Quite early the next morning, Ellen, attired in her riding-habit, stole down the steps and went into the servants' building. It was so early that all at Holmvik still slept. When she entered the room opposite the kitchen, a wailing sound met her ear. It came from an old woman who lay in bed. Ellen went to the sick person, bent down over her and asked, —

"How are you, Greta?"

"God bless you, Mamsell Ellen! How good of you to come to see a poor creature! I have had a bad night, but when I see you I always forget my pains."

"Has Lotta attended to you properly during the night, and given you the medicine regularly?"

"Yes, indeed she has; but my pains are just as severe; they are right here in my breast."

"Do you think that you are worse to-day?"

"Yes," faltered the sick woman, who spoke with great difficulty.

"Then we must have the doctor. I promised your daughter, when she was in such despair at being obliged to leave you to the care of others, that, with God's help, you should recover, and I intend to keep my word. I shall now ride after the doctor, but will be back soon." The young girl nodded kindly to the old woman and left the room. She took her way down to the stable.

"Be so good as to saddle my riding horse, Anderson," said she to one of the stable-men.

"Shall Fredrik attend you?" asked Anderson.

"No, it is unnecessary."

A few moments after this Count Uno opened his window and saw a woman riding away at full speed.

"Who can it be?" thought he, and remained standing at the window. "It is only seven o'clock, and we did not stop dancing until three; consequently it is no one from here, for all the household are still asleep."

The Count tried to go to sleep again; but as he could not succeed, he finally got up, dressed himself, and went down to the stable, to have a horse saddled. In a short time he galloped off in the same direction which the horse-woman had taken an hour before, while he thought, —

"I wonder who that Amazon was who went off all alone so early in the morning. Probably some lady from this domain" (he was now riding by a place called Lundagård); "in that case I shall inevitably meet her when she turns back." He held in his horse and let him take an easy pace.

"We are very singular creatures, we human beings," continued he in thought; "an entire stranger excites our curiosity, if she only appears in some unusual manner. So is it now with me. I see an unknown woman ride past my window on a fine horse, and directly I wish to know who she is and how she looks, without being led by any other interest than my curiosity."

In the midst of his soliloquy Uno heard horses' hoofs in the distance. They came nearer and nearer. At the turn of the road the equestrienne suddenly appeared. She flew forward, as if her horse had had wings, and dashed past Uno like a hurricane. Just at the moment when he prepared to take a closer inspection of her, she turned away her head, so that it was impossible for him to distinguish her features through the thick black veil that she had drawn down at the sight of the Count.

Uno reined in his horse just as she rode by him and thought, "She does not wish to be recognized. She knows me, then." With this he turned his horse, but could not refrain from looking back when he heard a carriage coming at full speed behind him. In it sat an elderly gentleman with mild and intelligent features. The Count allowed him to pass; for he had observed that the lady before him had also reined in her horse a moment to look back, and that when she discovered the carriage she continued her way more slowly.

"Now I could catch up with her," thought the Count; "but it would not be gallant, as she does not wish to be known." And as a result of this reasoning he too let his horse proceed leisurely. He saw plain-

ly that the lady on horseback wished to wait for the carriage, and when this came up they both went on together, and Uno was obliged to hurry his horse so as not to lose them from sight. To his no slight surprise they turned off at Holmvik and went up the avenue. When the Count, in his turn, galloped up the same, the lady and the horse had disappeared, but the carriage stood before the little building.

"Who has come here?" inquired Uno of the coachman.

"The doctor," was the answer.

Uno rode on to the stable, muttering, —

"I can lay a wager that the rider was no other than Ellen. Well, that is fitting, — genius and amazon. I 'm blessed if I can find anything to admire in such creatures. Can any genius in the world, however great it may be, compensate for the loss of the modesty, sweetness, and gentleness which ought to distinguish woman, especially when young?" The Count now jumped from his horse, threw the reins to the hostler, and went up the steps.

At breakfast, which they took in the garden surrounded by the perfume of flowers, the song of birds, and the glorious morning sun, Ellen did not appear. The Justice was apparently in a bad humor. While Uno was speaking to Sappho, he heard Countess Rubens say to Ellen's betrothed, —

"My dear Evert, you must promise me not to keep talking to Ellen about what people will say, how it looks, and so on. She has not been so brought up that she can ever become a slave to the opinion of others, but she has learned from me not to prize it any higher than it is actually worth. Her free, uncorrupted heart will never understand all the triviality and meanness which is called 'opinion.' Let her be as she is, an innocent child, and do not pay any attention to her little peculiarities of habit and such trifles. Believe me, Ellen will never forget her respect for propriety; but neither can she comprehend that a morning ride here in the country is improper."

"Well, I suppose I shall now have to yield as usual. You and my own heart always speak in Ellen's favor; but admit, that people could actually think that love is very weak in Ellen, when she prefers to ride out in the morning all alone to doing it in my company. You must acknowledge that such a conclusion is scarcely flattering to me, who — "

"Who would like people to think that you were adored by your betrothed," rejoined the Countess, not without a certain irony in her voice. "Dear Evert, leave once for all this eternal anxiety about what people think and say, and be contented with the certainty you possess, that Ellen, who could choose among so many above you in rank and fortune, nevertheless accepted you from inclination."

Evert reddened; it was evident that the Countess's words displeased him; and as his vanity could not very well bear the reminder, he resumed with some bitterness, —

"If I had the happiness of being preferred by Ellen to other more worthy rivals, I think I have also shown through my love that I can accommodate myself to her peculiarities of disposition and caprices better than any one else."

"Caprices!"

"Yes, or what name will you give to her absence from breakfast?"

Emy said nothing. She could not with justice deny that Ellen had for a few days past appeared to her capricious.

"Ought she to be so angry with me as to shut herself up in her room on that account?"

"I do not believe that this was the reason, but rather that she suffered from your remarks and the bitterness with which you uttered them."

"It is always my fault."

"Evert, I say now what I have told you several times before: you must know Ellen better before you unite your destinies."

"My gracious aunt, Ellen and I must either be married in the autumn or never." He left the Countess.

Emy remained sitting and looked thoughtfully after him. And Uno, who had listened to the conversation, thought, —

"Poor man, so he is foolish enough to marry that gifted girl. He is likely to pay dearly for his happiness."

While Emy was considering what was the wisest thing to do, Evert how highly necessary it was for him to be married to Ellen soon, and Uno was congratulating himself upon not being in Evert's place, the object of all this displeasure and blame sat by the old servant's sick-bed and assisted Lotta to apply leeches to the patient's breast; for the girl had a great terror of the small creatures, and could not be induced to take hold of them. Ellen, on the other hand, wished to show Lotta how childish she was to let fear keep her from helping a sick person. The forenoon was far advanced when she left the sick-room, satisfied with her morning's work; for Greta now slept calmly and quietly. In the court-yard Ellen met Uno.

"You have taken an early ride this morning," said he.

Ellen colored, looked coldly at him, and answered, —

"I do so every morning."

"Alone?"

"That is just as it happens."

"We missed you at breakfast."

"We would always rather be where we are indispensable, and I have followed this rule to-day."

"To whom is a young woman indispensable, if not to the man who loves her? Your betrothed misses you."

Ellen blushed again.

"I hope he has not complained about it to you?" Ellen looked at him proudly, made an inclination of the head, and left the place.

"I have irremediably wounded her self-love; that seems clear, but it is indifferent to me."

That afternoon the Kerners returned to Löda.

The rays of the afternoon sun illumined the park at Holmvik. The Count, Countess, and their two children had taken a walk to the sea-shore. Ellen and Evert had remained in the park. We find them sitting on a rustic sofa. The Justice had folded one of her hands between both his, and there was a touch of true emotion in his voice as he spoke to her.

"My beloved Ellen, I deeply feel the need of our rightly understanding each other. It seems to me sometimes as though we did not, and I suffer from it. You see, Ellen, I love you so sincerely, so earnestly, that every inequality in your disposition, every cold and unfriendly word, pains and wounds me, calls up bitter doubts in my soul of the continuance of your feelings for me. Ah! Ellen, I then feel with grief that you are rich and I poor. At such moments I am seized with an inner despair, and I should be ready to fly your presence, did not a love stronger than all other feelings bind me to you. The last few days have contained for me so many sources of suffering, that I resolved to ask you if you really loved me, or if the yes you gave was an indiscretion which you repent. If that is so, Ellen, then may God forgive you! you have cruelly played with my heart." The words in this speech were well calculated, for they appealed to all her noblest feelings, and her answer came truly and frankly from her heart.

"Dear Evert, forgive me if I have

troubled you; but God, who reads my heart, knows that it has not been intentional. Believe me, when I solemnly assure you that my heart is faithful, and that I have not once regretted the *yes* I gave you. Never say to me that you are poor and I rich; for this is something which I do not think of. I have only felt that of all the men I have seen, of all who have wished me to share their future, you were the only one to whom I had the courage to trust myself, because you better than others understood me. Faithful and honest is the feeling which binds me to you. If I sometimes appear cold and indifferent, then ascribe it to my dreamy and singular character, never to my heart, and be indulgent with my defects, which I shall try to remedy when I become your wife."

"And when, Ellen, shall this happiness be mine?" Evert kissed her hand warmly while he said beseechingly: "O, let me not wait for it too long. I feel that my calm and all my hope rests upon your consenting to let me lead you to the altar in the fall. Ellen, if you love me, if my happiness is dear to you, if my peace has any value for you, then promise me that our wedding may be celebrated on my birthday, the 18th of October. Ah! I am so childish that if you refuse I shall see in it a bad meaning. My good, sweet Ellen, could you grieve me so deeply as to refuse to grant my prayer?"

"No, I cannot," whispered Ellen with mildness. "It shall be as you wish."

Evert was delirious with joy, and looked full of bliss. Ellen was good and kind; but one sought in vain in this quiet tenderness for any trace of the lover's warmth. She seemed so passive that she resembled an object which willingly allows itself to be carried along by the stream. She smiled at Evert with the calm satisfaction which one experiences from making others happy; but there was nothing of love's intoxicating felicity in this smile.

After Evert with hand-kissings and protestations had given free course to his gratitude, he said with a warm glance, —

"As you know, beloved Ellen, I must go to Stockholm next week to attend to my duties, and thus live apart from you for several weeks. Will you promise to let nothing induce you to retract the promise you have now given me? Give me a solemn, a sacred assurance that you will not break it. I should die of despair if you did."

"Evert, shall an oath be needed when you have my word?"

"For my peace, during the long and painful separation. O Ellen, when one loves as I love, he is jealous, apprehensive, and uneasy. Ah, you do not wish me to be pursued by these tortures?"

"No, indeed I do not, Evert, and therefore I promise by my mother's memory never to take back the promise I have now given you."

"Thanks, angel!"

A peculiarity with all poetic temperaments is that they often commit great mistakes with regard to their own feelings, and allow the impression of the moment to pass for all. If any one speaks to their fancy, they immediately believe that the heart-strings are touched. Awake their compassion, their magnanimity, and your victory over them is decided. These children of the moment's transport can never, while young, analyze the nature of their feelings, because imagination so often takes their place, and the fancied impressions are as vivid as the actual. The result is that they sometimes believe themselves to be something very different from what they are.

Through this continual effort to govern herself ever since childhood, Ellen had succeeded in overcoming many extremes in her disposition, in curbing many impetuous and fiery feelings, and in consequence of this she believed that

she possessed a perfect mastery over her heart, and that it would never beat more violently for any one than her reason approved. The sense and moderation which Ellen had succeeded in gaining through this daily effort to control all outbursts she regarded as an evidence that she could not experience any emotions of a strong and lively nature. She wished to be a woman of mild and calm feelings. With indifference had she received the homage of all the young men who competed to win her heart. She had found them poor in spirit and empty in soul. The man whom she would choose must be able to awake her interest through some prominent intellectual or moral worth. Evert of Ochard had succeeded in interesting her through his animated conversation and a certain wealth of ideas. He had read a good deal; and if his gifts were not brilliant, he was however sufficiently well endowed to dazzle in society. To this his remarkably good memory contributed very essentially. Few persons possess the gift of expressing themselves about all that they have seen and read in so agreeable a manner as he. He knew how to throw warmth and feeling into all that he said, to give color and interest to the most insignificant things. In a word, our Justice was just the man to strike the fancy of a girl who considered the ability to talk well to be the same as a superior understanding. Ellen regarded him as a man of unusual attainments, with a heart open to all that was noble and beautiful. Sympathy grew to be affection, so that when he requested her hand she deemed herself, after a careful examination of her feelings, as strongly attached to him as it was possible for her to be; and with the full intention of making him happy and becoming so herself, she consented to be his wife.

It is certain that Ellen would never break her resolution to create his happiness, however life might shape itself for her. The main feature in Ellen's character, and that upon which Countess Rubens laid the greatest weight in her education, was a deep piety and a true respect for duty. This was the surest counterpoise to an overstrained fancy, and the power which would always keep her from being carried away by her imagination. Emy could not take the idealism away from her soul; but she had given it such a direction that it would be a shield to her in the moment of passion. She had taught her to aspire to the good, noble, and morally beautiful, and the result of this was that the young girl did not dream about making a romantic drama of her life, but regarded it as an ennobling period for a higher aim.

And now we will return to the thread of the story.

Count Rubens intended to take a journey abroad through the summer, in order to consult some physicians with regard to a liver complaint with which he was troubled. Countess Kerner had invited Ellen, Ebba, and young Arthur to stay at Löda during the two months that he and his wife were to visit foreign lands, — an invitation which Emy had gladly accepted.

Eight days after Ellen's conversation with Evert and the solemn promise that their wedding should be celebrated in October, a promise of which she had told Countess Emy, and, in spite of all the objections on her part, firmly resolved to fulfil, we find Count Rubens's whole family, Ellen included, at Löda. It is the afternoon before the Count and Countess's departure to the capital, and Emy and Ellen are sitting together in a little cabinet.

"My beloved Ellen, I shall now for the first time since I became a mother leave my children for quite a long period,

and it is with a peculiar feeling of anxiety that I separate from them, especially Ebba. She is at the age when the need of a tender mother is so great. Ellen, I confide her to your care; watch over her during these months, as I should do; and if you love me, then let me see my darling as glad and blooming as ever on my return. Arthur is still a child, but Ebba is a young maiden of the age when the heart is most easily impressed and is liable to receive a wound that may never be healed."

"Be calm, dear Aunt. I will watch over them both, and so faithfully, that I will make myself their very conscience, their hearts' confidante; and this will not be difficult, for I am almost a part of Ebba. She confides every thought to me, every impression that she experiences, and I shall make the same use of all that she tells me, as I believe that you would. Ah, I shall be your children's mother while you are away, as you have been to me, my noble foster-mother."

"Thanks, my Ellen!"

The next morning the Rubens left, and there was more than could be expressed in the look with which Emy regarded Ellen as she whispered, "God protect you!" The next moment the horses hastened away with the woman so deeply loved by all. Ellen remained standing on the steps and looked after the retreating carriage, while Ebba, dissolved in tears, had thrown herself down in an easy-chair in the saloon, and Arthur with great effort struggled against his rising tears. No tear came to Ellen's eyes, no sigh escaped her, she stood perfectly motionless. When the carriage had disappeared from her sight, she repeated in a whisper, "Yes, God protect us." Then she turned to go into the saloon and comfort Ebba, but found herself at that moment right before Uno, who had stood behind her. When she met his black eyes, something like a shudder went through her heart, and she would have wished to fly, far, far away, but instead of this she passed him without saying a word. It was an inexplicable oppression which Ellen experienced at the sight of him, and which made him appear to her as one who made a mockery of the heart's deepest feelings, while he spoke so much of the respect that he rendered them. Ellen tried to console Ebba with her kind and hearty words, and succeeded so well, that Ebba accepted the proposal to accompany Sappho, Alma, and her down to the park, when just then these words from the balcony met her ear, —

"My dear Arthur, will you allow yourself to be so deeply depressed by the separation from your parents, when you see how little your foster-sister is affected by it?"

It was Count Uno's voice. Ellen colored, and her eyes flashed with anger.

Countess Sappho had not heard the Count's words, but cried to Arthur to come with them; and then they all, with the exception of Uno, went down to the park.

Two weeks had elapsed since that day, when we find them all gathered in the garden. Ebba, Alma, Arthur, and his teacher, Magister Dahl, were engaged in arranging some plants in Arthur's herbarium. Ellen, Sappho, Oscar, and Uno sat at a little distance from them.

"Have you looked at Magister Dahl's face?" inquired Oscar, turning to Uno. "It is one of the most intelligent I have seen."

"O yes; but it has an expression of reserve which appears to me repulsive," replied Uno. "I cannot endure these persons who resemble walled-up graves, for one is always deceived in them. Like the grave they often cover only worthless bones, while we others imagine that they are richly gifted souls. The much-praised self-command is nothing else

than a mask to conceal spiritual poverty." Uno had his gaze fastened on Ellen, who felt extremely incensed when she fancied from his tone that the words were directed to her.

"What perverted ideas, dear Uno," said Sappho with spirit, and threw her head back with the peculiar motion which with her always indicated bad-humor. "Now I will venture the assertion that the richer our natures are, the stronger and deeper our feelings, the more carefully do we conceal them within ourselves. I know no one with a warmer heart than my Oscar, and yet what a great power he has over himself." Sappho extended her hand to her husband with a fascinating smile.

Ellen looked up and was astonished at the expression which Uno's eyes took at these last words of Sappho's and the motion which accompanied them. One could say that his look, which rested a second on Sappho, contained something as once mocking and sad.

"With all respect for Oscar's self-command, an exception is nothing to the purpose. And if all distinguished persons were endowed with this quality, I would still detest them. I love to read in the face what the heart feels, to count its beats and interpret its emotions. The one who is only led by his inflexible will, and who deals out his feelings in small quantities, inspires in me a sort of fear and puts me at a distance."

"Then you prefer a surrender to the feelings. Ah, my friend! you ought to have known me twelve years ago, and I am sure you would have been completely cured of these ideas," said Sappho laughing. "I, on the other hand, consider the man pitiable and contemptible who is not master of his passions, but gives them a free rein."

"With men the reason ought to prevail, with woman the heart." Uno rose and went to the group who were occupied with their botanical operations. Sappho leaned against Oscar and whispered some tender words to him. They looked very happy. Ellen had bent deeper over her work. Thoughts of an entirely strange and unusual nature arose within her, and she asked herself by what right this stranger continually assailed her? All his words, even upon the most trivial subject, took the character of an attack against her. She did not consider that she perhaps allowed herself to be influenced by her enmity, and through this applied everything to herself. From these reflections she was roused by Sappho, who said, —

"Ellen, dear, improvise some verses upon happiness."

Ellen looked up, and when she found that Uno was far enough away not to hear her, she replied, smiling, —

"Aunt, Count Uno has entirely deprived me of my inspiration, and I could not improvise four lines in his presence."

"And why?" asked Oscar.

"I cannot explain it in any other way than that an antipathy exists between us."

"But Uno, in spite of his peculiarities, is a chivalrous and uncommon young man, to whom you would yield your respect if you rightly knew him."

Ellen looked at Sappho and said with a ravishing smile, —

"How good Uncle Kerner is, always to wish to discover the better qualities in every person! I assure you, Uncle, that I render Count Uno all my respect, but — nothing more."

"Ah, indeed; well then, as a penalty you shall now have to call him *thou*," said Oscar, laughing.

"No, for God's sake, Uncle."

"There is no help for it. — Uno!" cried Count Oscar.

Uno turned round.

"Come here, and bring the young people with you."

"The thought has struck me," continued he, "that you are entirely too young to be called uncle, and therefore I pro-

pose that the girls shall call you *thou*. As Ellen belongs to the family, I have also made the same proposition to her, so that she may overcome a certain disinclination that she has for you."

The proposal was received by Uno with a pleasant smile, and he said some cordial words to Ebba, after which Alma and Ebba gave him the "*thou-kiss*." He then approached Ellen. She raised her head quickly and said in a voice that trembled a little, —

"Permit me to exclude the word *thou*, an appellation altogether too familiar between us. We will stop at calling each other by name."

Uno reddened and looked at Ellen with a peculiar glance which she endured calmly. He recovered himself directly, —

"As we are not to say *thou*, *Ellen* must admit, that with the permission to call you by name, I am allowed to kiss your hand."

Ellen reached him her hand with a gesture at once graceful and dignified.

"Do you know, Uno, what Ellen has just said about you?" asked Oscar.

"No; but it was certainly nothing flattering." Uno threw himself down on a seat and beat the leaves from a bush with his cane.

"Nothing ill; she only said that all her inspiration left her in your presence."

"Probably in consequence of the antipathy which she feels towards me."

"Or rather, in consequence of the bitter attacks which you make against inspiration," said Sappho.

"Yes, I confess that I do not believe in it."

"Why not?" Ellen threw out the question with a peculiarly defiant tone.

"Because I cannot conceive of such a phenomenon."

"Then you are not entitled to pass judgment upon it. That which we do not comprehend, we cannot judge of. You are consequently convicted."

"If that is so, then there is something between us which can be called antipathy."

"You are right."

A servant arrived with the mail-bag. Count Oscar opened it, and gave two letters to Ellen.

"From your betrothed and Emy," said he.

Ellen took them and went away.

During the remainder of the afternoon Uno occupied himself almost exclusively with Ebba, who was particularly captivating, and captivated Uno also seemed to be.

Singularly enough, Ellen, who followed Ebba and Uno with the watchful eye of a mother, found a certain something in his manner which called up the conviction that he was only amused by Ebba's society, and that she had not awakened the same feelings in his breast as he in hers.

One evening, some weeks subsequent to Count Rubens's departure, Ellen sat on the edge of Ebba's bed, after the latter had retired.

"Tell me, Ebba, what do you now think of Uno? Do you remember how little he pleased you the first time you saw him?"

"I recollect it very well. I found him ugly, disagreeable, and mean."

"Something of the sort; but now, — how do you find him now?"

"Handsome, amiable, and good."

"Then you like him?"

"Hush, wait a little, Ellen." Ebba sat up in bed, put her arm around Ellen's neck, and continued: "Do I like him? Yes, very much. When he is away, it seems to me less pleasant. When he talks to me, I become glad and feel so satisfied. Ah! Ellen, I like him very much better than Magister Dahl, Henrico, and the others. Don't you?"

"No, dear Ebba, I do not. Henrico has something nobler and more earnest, Dahl is milder and has more ability."

"May be; but as I have many faults

myself, I like those best who are not perfect. Say, Ellen, what do you believe he thinks of me?"

"He finds you to be a lovely child."

"Child! Ah, one is not a child at sixteen, after being confirmed. No, Ellen, he cannot regard me as a child."

"But he does, nevertheless, Ebba. The preference and friendliness which characterize his behavior towards you only come from the fact that he considers you still to belong to childhood."

"But Alma is a year younger than I, and he is not towards her as he is to me."

"Because Alma is more serious than you. Your childish vivacity amuses him."

"Ellen!" exclaimed Ebba hastily, "I do not like you to talk so. I do not wish him to consider me a child."

"Do you wish me to speak frankly to you?" asked Ellen in a voice so inexpressibly gentle, that Ebba kissed her, saying, —

"Forgive me, Ellen, I am a vain fool, as mamma says. Ah, you dear, good girl, you are right, I am a child, and ought not to feel bad over it. Papa says, childhood is the season of joy."

"Yes, my darling, let us talk about your parents. O, if we had them here!"

The girls clasped their hands and leaned their bowed heads together. A warm and fervent prayer united their hearts.

The following morning Ellen took one of her early walks. One of her favorite enjoyments was to stroll around on summer mornings, or lie outstretched in the luxuriant grass, listening to the song of the birds and the rustling of the leaves. Entirely oblivious of everything save the imagery which then filled her soul, she abandoned herself without restraint to the rich world of imagination. In order to enjoy this pleasure undisturbed, she went out early, before the others had risen. How many poetic and delightful longings found form and words during these solitary rambles! How many warm and glowing praises to the Creator ascended from her heart! It was the poet's soul, free and untrammelled, which then expanded and breathed out all its exuberance. Poor Ellen! why wast thou not allowed to dream and idealize in some unnoticed place? Thy tender genius could then have developed in all its manifold phases, and shone like a clear star over thy life; but the quiet felicity for which thou wast created, far removed from the world's wrestling-place and its miserable passions, was never to become thine, and thou, poor poetical girl! wast not to be allowed to remain thyself.

Now, as usual, she wandered down to the park, through which a stream flowed, shaded on both sides by the park's luxuriant trees. The hanging-birch bent its rich crown over the mirror-like surface and seemed to contemplate its foliage with a melancholy smile. With slow, lingering steps and a dreamy air she walked through the park, where the thrush, bullfinch, and linnet tuned their carols. A smile full of felicity rested upon her features. She stopped ever and anon as if to inhale in full draughts the glorious air, full of perfume, poesy, and song. On coming to a slope enclosed by trees and bushes, she clasped her hands and sank upon her knees with her gaze lifted to heaven. There was something transfigured in the young girl's face, something of deep and holy devotion, but a devotion full of thankfulness and youthful rapture. It was a child's hopeful prayer to its Heavenly Father. Had an human eye seen her at this moment, it would certainly have found her beautiful; and had any human ear listened to the words which passed over the fresh lips, it would have caught them in the flight to preserve them for posterity; but God alone, to whom they were addressed, heard them, and he alone saw the gentle suppliant. The next moment

she rested, dreaming in the grass, and tried in her shifting fancy to clothe in words the song of the birds and the murmur of the water.

She would probably have remained in the same spot all day, had not the sound of the breakfast-bell roused her from the reveries in which she was absorbed. She drew a deep sigh, passed her hand over her brow, and rose, turning her steps homeward. She went through the garden, and when she with her quiet tread passed the lower saloon, the windows of which opened to the floor, so that one could see all that took place within, she met a sight which forced her to stop. She saw Sappho sitting on one of the small sofas, and Uno on his knees before her. Sappho's aspect was sad, serious, almost indignant. Uno's features she could not see. The young girl stood motionless some moments; she then drew back, and instead of going past, she went round another way.

At breakfast Sappho was thoughtful and showed herself still more tender and loving to Oscar. There was something actually humble in her demeanor, as if she had wished to atone for some injustice. Towards Uno her manner appeared somewhat cold. He, for his part, showed Ebba the same friendly attention as usual, laughing and jesting with her.

After breakfast, Ellen, Alma, and Ebba went to see an old sick woman whom Ellen, who made herself acquainted with all the sick and infirm in her neighborhood (during the weeks she was staying at Löda), had taken under her care. But Löda was one of the few estates which, through the owner's humanity and consideration for his dependants, was not troubled with poverty.

On the way home from the visit to the suffering woman, Ebba proposed that they should take another path, so that by crossing the stream on a plank at a place where the water formed rapids, they could come to the park, a favorite spot with the three girls. They turned off into the wood and continued their way, chatting merrily. When they came to the plank, Ellen said, —

"No, girls, we dare not go over that; see how frail it looks."

"O, there is no danger, Mamsell Edling" (Alma's governess), "and I went over it too days ago," exclaimed Ebba, and sprang out on the bridge.

Ellen, who saw the weak plank bend, seized hold of Alma, who intended to follow, and checked her. Just then they heard a sharp crack, and the next instant Ebba had fallen into the water, only kept above the surface by her clothing, which had caught in the broken plank. Ellen had uttered a cry of anguish. Ebba made a violent effort and with this tore the dress, so that the only thing which held her up gave way and she disappeared in the rapids. But quick as thought Ellen had started out on the tottering and broken plank. With desperation she seized hold of Ebba's clothes, which yet kept her from sinking. She lay outstretched on the shaking support, and summoned all her strength to hold Ebba up, crying to Alma, who wished to go to her aid, —

"For God's sake, Alma, do not come here; for then we are all lost." Alma remained weeping on the bank.

"But, Ellen, you will never be able to save Ebba alone."

"I shall do it, or die with her," answered Ellen, and succeeded in getting Ebba's head above water.

"Take hold of my hand, Ebba," said she.

Without rightly knowing what she did, Ebba obeyed the direction and Ellen could now twine her arm around her waist and draw her up on the timber which swayed under the heavy burden and threatened to drop down with the two girls.

"Reach Ebba your hand, Alma, but without stepping on the wood," cried Ellen, who knew, as she lay there on the

ruins of the extempore bridge, that at the slightest imprudent motion on her part, or the first attempt to raise herself, both she and Ebba would be buried in the current.

Ebba, who now realized completely the danger in which they stood, seized Alma's hand and crept to the bank; but carefully as this was done, the plank on which Ellen lay gave way and fell into the stream. With astonishing coolness Ellen had calculated this chance, and in the fall seized hold of a pile that stood in the water, while she cried, —

"Be quiet, I shall certainly help myself up."

She kept her word. The hold she took had saved her, and she soon stood on land. The brave girl's strength was however exhausted, and she sank down on the grass, unable to hold herself up. Alma and Ebba threw themselves weeping on their knees beside her.

"Ellen, sweet Ellen, how is it with you?"

But Ellen was not able to answer; some clear drops of blood were seen on her lips, and directly afterwards a crimson stream gushed from her mouth. Ebba was in perfect despair, wrung her hands, and burst into violent lamentation. Alma ran down to the stream and brought some water in her hat, with which she bathed Ellen's temples, and also prevailed upon her to swallow a few drops. Finally the bleeding ceased, and Ellen smiled at them faintly.

"Ellen, Ellen," sobbed Ebba, "it is my thoughtlessness, my disobedience, which have caused this accident. Ah, Ellen! my whole life will I give you; I will obey you blindly. Say only that you forgive me, that you are better, that I have not been the cause of your death."

"My good Ebba, do not weep. I am better, I am well now; I am not angry with you, little friend."

When Ellen had calmed her young companions, they returned slowly home. Ellen supported herself on Alma's arm.

"Let us as unobserved as possible steal up and change our clothes, so that we may not frighten Aunt and Uncle, and afterwards we will relate the occurrence calmly."

They succeeded but partially, for Ebba and Ellen had scarcely gone half-way up the first flight before Oscar and Uno came out into the hall. Alma, who constituted the rear guard, thus found herself face to face with them when the door opened. The young girl had undergone such agony, that the sight of her beloved father gave her an inexpressible joy, after all the painful feelings she had experienced. She paid no regard to Uno, but sprang to her father, threw herself on his neck, and exclaimed, —

"Papa, papa, you can never believe how heroic Ellen has been!"

"What has happened, my child?" asked Count Oscar, caressing her blooming cheeks.

"That she shall tell you herself; now I will go up to her. O, if I could one day resemble Ellen, mamma, you, and all those who are good!"

Alma glided from her father's arms and sprang up the stairs.

In the girls' room their maid was helping them to change their clothes, and they had just finished when the dinner-bell called them. Sappho, who had been to visit some one in need, came home at the same time.

Half an hour later we find them all assembled in the dining-hall.

"What is the matter with Fröken Ebba?" inquired Dahl when he saw the child, who was still very pale.

"Good heavens, child, what has happened to you!" exclaimed Sappho.

"Only a little mischance," answered Ellen, smiling; "and if you permit, we will speak of it in private after dinner."

"Ellen does not wish all to know of

her heroism," observed Oscar; "I am aware of your fear of letting people know how rich and self-sacrificing your heart is."

"Dear Uncle!" Ellen said no more, but the look which she gave Oscar said so much and had such a shy expression, that Uno, whose eyes were fastened upon her, was astonished that this cold face could acquire so much soul.

"Then I will keep silent," said Oscar, smiling.

"Unobtrusiveness is a virtue which always becomes its possessor, if she rightly employs it," fell in Uno with his irritating tone.

"And with it I wish to shine, is it not so?" said Ellen, looking at Uno.

"We all more or less wish to shine with our merits, and especially with those which we place foremost."

"Then I know a virtue which I place before unobtrusiveness," said Ellen, with unusual spirit.

"And that is?"

"To think well of others."

"And this virtue I lack? Was that your meaning?"

"I do not know what virtues you lack or possess."

Uno said nothing, and they soon rose from the table. The young folks strolled around the garden, but Ellen and Sappho remained in with Oscar.

Quite simply Ellen now related the event of the forenoon, entirely omitting the perilous features of Ebba's rescue, and making no mention of the hemorrhage.

Two hours after this Uno approached Ellen, as she was sitting alone on the balcony.

"I fear that I wounded you this noon at the table," said he; "and that was not my intention."

"Indeed; what then was your intention?"

"To express my opinion that everything that is studied is unnatural, and seems like something with which one wishes to shine."

"You mean to say by this, that unobtrusiveness with me is studied?"

"You are too proud, permit me to say too *conceited*, to be unassuming."

"And what leads you to this conclusion?"

"Your whole behavior; your antipathy to me, which only proceeds from the fact that I do not, like all the rest, admire your genius. You are wounded because I place something higher than that."

"No. I have not striven to be admired, and could consequently not be wounded at not obtaining what I had never sought."

"Ah! your answer now best proves that pride is the main trait in your character; but if it was not my inability to kneel to that which merely dazzles, what then has engendered the open disfavor which you show me?"

"Perhaps if you had asked me yesterday I should have answered your question, now —" Ellen looked at him and became silent; for she could not tell him what she thought, namely, "now I despise you too much. You kneel to your relative's wife, you love her, and you are, in a word, not a sufficiently honorable man for me to desire to make you any explanation." So thought Ellen.

"I beg you, speak out."

"What would it serve? We are, as you yourself said, born with prejudices against each other."

"Then you will not tell me why you find it difficult to endure me?"

"Let us change the subject. Have you read this poem?" Ellen handed him Oehlenschläger's Axel and Walborg.

"Ah, you desire a literary conversation?" Uno smiled ironically.

"Not at all. It is only Axel's charac-

ter which I would recommend you to study." Ellen rose to go.

"And the reason? Is it his faithfulness which you consider that I ought to take as a model?"

"Of your faithfulness I know nothing, neither have I any desire to remedy my ignorance. No, it is Axel's respect for his duty, the chivalrous and elevated spirit in all his actions, which I consider to be a worthy study for every young man, especially for a nobleman."

"Then you do not regard me as one who places his duty above all else, who possesses a chivalrous character?"

"The one who takes the position that feeling alone ought to prevail, is a slave to his passions."

"You are wrong, Ellen. I love every expression of pure and noble feelings; but I despise every surrender to low and miserable desires."

"Do you?" It would be impossible to give the peculiar expression with which Ellen uttered these words. There was something of commiseration, something of contempt, in the tone.

Ebba now came to them, saying to Uno, —

"Promise me that you will do what I ask of you."

"Ebba, I will not only do what you ask of me, but I will do it with the greatest pleasure, even if it were to travel on foot from Haparanda to Ystad."

"Then sing for us some Spanish national songs."

"Yes, if you can persuade Ellen to sing some Swedish ones first."

"I obtained your promise without conditions," said Ebba, putting her head on one side.

Uno seized her hands and said with warmth, —

"I will do it. Ebba has me for whatever she desires."

Ebba blushed so beautifully and tripped into the saloon to announce her victory. Uno rose to follow her. Looking at him sharply, Ellen said, —

"Was what you now said also in accordance with conscience and duty?" With this she hastened before him into the saloon.

A moment after, Uno sang some of those sweet, sentimental, and languishing Spanish people's songs, in which there is so much poesy, and a melody that goes so to the depth of the heart, that one is seized with a longing for I know not what. He sung them with a fine, sonorous voice, full of feeling, and accompanied himself with ease upon the piano. It was the first time that Ellen heard him sing. Leaning back in an easy-chair, she listened, as if to tones from a new and unknown world. She fancied that every one of them struck a new chord within her, and in order to abandon herself entirely to these impressions, she closed her eyes. The singer had disappeared, and she imagined that this voice, at once so glowing and yet so delightfully soothing, was wafted to her from a higher and better world. She allowed herself to be transported by this tranquil and dreamy sensation so peculiar to her temperament, but which was destined to be gradually pressed aside and only remain in the depths of her soul as a melancholy longing.

Poor Ellen! how many times, when I have seen you with a weary look and a cold, indifferent air dragged from one vain and foolish pastime to another, have I not pitied you and thought with pain how seldom human beings are allowed to stay in the place for which they seem created. What had you, with your rich soul, which longed for a quiet, unobserved happiness, to do in the vortex of the world? You stood there so alone and so misunderstood by all.

When the song was ended, Ellen still sat there. When they all surrounded Uno and thanked him, Ellen alone remained motionless.

"Well, Ellen," asked Sappho, "will you not thank Uno for the pleasure he has afforded us?"

"I cannot express my thanks for it," answered Ellen, giving him her hand. "The pleasure was too great for so poor an acknowledgment."

At these words there was a flash of light in Uno's black eyes, and they rested on Ellen a second with a strange expression.

"That was praise more flattering than any which my singing has hitherto brought me."

"Only the truth. I never flatter."

"If my singing has afforded you an actual pleasure, then grant me a prayer," said Uno.

"Ask nothing of me," answered Ellen quickly; "I cannot grant *you* anything."

"And yet I beg you, sing one single Swedish people's song." Uno bent a knee to Ellen, who was sitting in the same easy-chair in which Sappho sat when she had seen him on his knees before her. Ellen's face, which had been so mild and sweet before, became in an instant cold and indifferent. She rose and said in a low voice, "You fall on your knees too often and too easily." Then she hastened out on the balcony.

In the afternoon Ebba had a fever and a severe headache, a result of the cold. The next day she was obliged to keep her bed. Ellen took her place beside her. Sappho came up with the physician, who declared that it was only a slight cold, which would pass over in a few days.

"But Mademoiselle Kahn looks far more ill," said the doctor, as he looked at her pale, tired face.

"Probably lack of rest," answered Ellen, smiling. "I was so anxious about Ebba in the night."

"Ellen raised blood yesterday," said Alma, who was sitting on a stool at Ellen's feet.

"Blood!" exclaimed the Countess and the doctor at the same time.

"It was not dangerous," said Ellen. "It was only a consequence of my exerting myself a little."

"Ah! but you lost so much blood, Ellen," rejoined Alma, sorrowfully.

The doctor felt her pulse, gave a prescription, and added the warning that she should keep very quiet.

Some days elapsed, during which Ellen and Ebba were not visible. Little or rather nothing, was seen of Alma and Arthur; for where Ellen was, there were they also.

On the fourth day after Ebba was taken sick, she was up, but was not allowed to leave her room. Ellen again looked well and bright, but faithful to the responsibility she had taken upon herself of supplying Emy's place to her child, she did not leave Ebba.

Counts Oscar and Uno, Magister Dahl and Henrico, were sitting on the balcony.

"So you assert, Magister Dahl, that nothing of pride and vanity exists in Mademoiselle Kahn's disposition and character? That she shuns all notice and rather shrinks from attention?"

"Yes, Herr Count, that was my assertion, and I really think that I am better qualified to judge of her than others are, for I have been in daily contact with her for seven years. A more retiring and sensitive nature than hers I have never met. Endowed with a poet's soul and a poet's ability, she is afraid to let any one suspect all the wealth of her nature. I have been her teacher, and I can say without exaggeration that the pupil often confounded the teacher with her penetration. You would be amazed if you could look into her soul and see the amount of knowledge that she has acquired, and yet is there anything of the 'blue stocking' in her?"

"No; but still there is an inner con-

sciousness of her own superiority, a high opinion of her own intellectual advantages, which makes her lightly esteem woman's sphere, and consider it beneath her dignity to have a heart."

Uno's three hearers, who had all known Ellen from childhood, burst into a laugh, as if they had found what he said so ridiculous that it did not deserve anything but laughter.

"My dear Uno, you seem perfectly determined to charge Ellen with faults which she has never possessed."

"It is possible that I am mistaken; but I should be willing to bet a good deal that she would never be able to throw herself into any danger from devotion; she has too much regard for herself for that."

"Fie, Uno, how wicked you are!" burst out Alma, who had stood in the door and heard the whole conversation. "You ought to have seen her when she helped Ebba, how she tried to save her without any thought of herself. And then when she raised blood from the violent exertion, how mild and angelic she was, while Ebba was in perfect despair. I have always seen Ellen manifest a goodness far greater than any one else has given proof of, and yet you say that she has no heart. How well she took care of the old servant at Holmvik, rode after the doctor herself, and attended to her as if the old woman had been her mother; and while she was doing all this, you others were only finding fault with her. I heard all that you and Ochard said."

"I believe that you are angry with Uno," exclaimed Oscar, laughing.

"Yes, papa, am I not right?"

"Perfectly, my child."

"And I shall have to lay down my arms," said Uno.

"I think each and all who attack Ellen will be obliged to do that," observed Henrico, with a slight blush, "and yet she is not perfect by any means. The charm of her character lies just in the fact that she has a multitude of small faults, which make her like other people."

"And what then are these faults? I almost believed that you had all concluded to regard her as a saint."

"Not at all," said Dahl, smiling. "As a pupil she was very capricious and often intractable. If she took a notion to devote herself exclusively to history, it was next to impossible to get her to give any attention to other subjects before she had been allowed to follow her fancy for several days. Then she would come to me and say, 'Are you angry with me, my teacher? Do not be so, I will now study whatever you desire.' At other times she did not study at all, but spent hours in only playing and dreaming, and then it was impossible to force her. Besides Ellen is stubborn. You will never succeed in changing any conviction of hers, even if it is false. She easily forgives injustice, but she does not forget that you committed it. That is to say, if you have judged her actions wrongly, she will pardon it, but it would be impossible to persuade her that you could ever judge her rightly. Moreover, she is often led by her fancy, and ascribes qualities to people which they utterly lack, if they only succeed in striking any of her nobler instincts. She can have the utmost mildness, charity, and toleration; but yet be severe and bitter, if you offend her ideas of right. For that which she considers right she will sacrifice herself without complaint. Such is Ellen."

"I would like to resemble her, even in her faults," said Alma. "Do you not wish, papa, that I was like her?"

"No, my child, I would have you just as you are."

Soon after Uno, a condemner of all revery, wandered through the park a dreamer himself, and thought of Axel's character in Oehlenschläger's tragedy.

In a few days Ebba was completely recovered. One morning after breakfast Ellen had gone down to the park; when she returned and was about to enter the saloon, she heard Sappho say, —

"I forgive you, Uno; but only from love to Oscar. Because you are his relative, I will forget that you have wounded me so deeply."

"Thanks, dear Sappho, and believe me when I solemnly assure you that I would give much if this unfortunate declaration had never passed my lips. I admire you and shall never forget you."

"Enough! We are thus friends again." Sappho gave him her hand, and Ellen stepped in.

In the afternoon Uno, Ebba, and Ellen amused themselves by playing graces. Count Arthur, Alma, and Arthur had taken a walk down to the iron furnace. Henrico had gone away, and the Countess sat in the saloon, engaged in an animated conversation with Magister Dhal.

Ebba was in high spirits. She threw the hoop high and let it describe a magnificent circle, as she exclaimed, —

"Let us see, Uno, if you can catch it?"

Uno caught it, and said, —

"How could you think that I should fail when you threw it?"

"Well, do not keep it but throw it to Ellen," cried Ebba with a beaming look.

"I will either keep it, or send it back to you." Uno's glance rested on Ebba with a peculiar delight, but flitted for a second from her to Ellen, who stood motionless, leaning on her stick.

"Then throw it here," said Ebba, "and let us finish."

Uno complied with her desire, but the warm and animated glances were no longer fastened on Ebba. The young girl did not observe this, however, in her effort to catch the hoop.

"Ah, I have missed it," she exclaimed in a troubled voice. At the same instant the hoop fell at her feet and she lowered her sticks with an expression of sadness; a tear trembled in her eye.

Uno hastened forward, picked up the hoop and handed it to Ebba, saying, —

"It considers it the right place to lie at Ebba's feet."

"Thanks, thanks," stammered Ebba, blooming as a rose and glad as a bird. She took the hoop and hurried into the saloon.

Ellen and Uno found themselves alone on the open lawn.

"Shall we follow Ebba?" asked Uno.

Ellen approached him, saying with deep earnestness, —

"Uno, you are playing a dangerous game."

"What do you refer to?" Uno's eyes sank before Ellen's gaze.

"You are exerting all your power to make Ebba love you, — that charming child, whose heart flies to meet you without distrust. You act wrongly!"

"Why, Ellen? Tell me!" What was it in Uno's voice that brought a fine rosy hue to Ellen's cheeks? Was it the peculiar trembling? We cannot say; but what we do know is, that she raised her head a little as if indignant at the blood's agitation, and answered, —

"Because you do not love her."

"And who then do I love?" Uno seized Ellen's hand as if to keep her, but dropped it directly, for all emotion had disappeared from her face and she looked at him with a calm and steady expression.

"That question your own heart will answer best, if you will listen to it, and not play with others' hearts for pastime. Ebba is too good for such trifling."

"Is she too good to become my wife?" asked Uno coldly.

"Yes, when you can only offer her your hand and not your heart."

"But I intend to offer her my heart."

Ellen threw her head back and said with stern earnestness, "Can you do it?"

These words, this so simple question, seemed to drive the blood in a swift

course through Uno's veins, for he made a hasty motion of the head, and asked in a tone that sounded almost angry, —

"And what should hinder me?"

"Your honor. You cannot offer Ebba what you do not possess." Ellen went in. Uno stood still and looked after her with an expression that reminded one of Vesuvius in an eruption.

"Has she guessed my secret?" muttered he. "No, I have scarcely betrayed it to myself."

That evening we again find Ellen sitting on the edge of Ebba's bed.

"Ebba, do you know what your mother said when she went away?" began Ellen.

"No, but tell me, dear Ellen."

"She bade me watch over you as if you were my own child, and give you back to her as joyous and happy as ever. I promised to do so, and now I fear that I shall not be able to keep my word. This would trouble me deeply."

"Am I then not as joyous as I used to be?" asked Ebba with downcast eyes.

"O yes, but your happiness no longer proceeds from yourself, but depends upon another. How restless you were those days that you were compelled to keep your room! Why were you so? Tell me."

"I wished to see Uno," answered Ebba looking her foster-sister frankly in the eye. Ellen bent down and kissed her.

"Tell me now, what is your feeling for Uno."

"I like him very much, and have an inexpressible desire that he should like me most of all."

"And if he did not?"

"I should feel sorry."

"But you would then think less of him?"

"Perhaps. I think I should be angry with him."

"Then you believe he is very fond of you?"

"Yes, I certainly do."

"But, Ebba, with my hand on my heart I can solemnly assure you that he does not love you." Ellen took both Ebba's hands in hers and pressed them to her heart. "Do not turn pale, child, do not look so sad, but believe me, when I swear in the name of God that Uno loves, — but *not you.* O, do not weep dear child! Think of your mother, think of me, and do not fasten your heart to this man, who cannot give you his."

A few tears had quickly run down Ebba's cheeks, but she dried them immediately.

"Ellen, are you sure of what you say?"

"Perfectly; or do you think that I would tell you what I did not know with certainty to be true?"

"Thanks!" Ebba twined her arms about Ellen's neck. "Thank you, my Ellen, and now, good night!"

Ebba lay still and quiet for an hour, but then she cried to Ellen, —

"Are you asleep?"

"Not yet; we have not said our prayers, Ebba. I waited for you to speak of it."

Ebba now lifted her heart, touched by sorrow, to God; Ellen prayed also for her beloved foster-mother's child; and then they both fell asleep.

The next day Uno sat with Ellen, who had her work out on the terrace.

"You have several times uttered words to me, Ellen, which I do not rightly understand, and particularly last evening. Give me an explanation of them. As they concern me, my request is reasonable."

"What do you wish me to explain?"

"Your assertion, for example, that I played with Ebba's heart."

"And I still assert it. You do not love this innocent child, and yet you throw so much tenderness into your manner towards her, that she as well as every one else could believe in this attention."

"But this tenderness is not false. From the first moment I saw Ebba, I have had but one desire, and that is to call her my wife. This charming child, as you have very correctly called her, whose every feeling may be read in her face, whose heart lies on her lips, appears to me so lovely, that I fancy happiness to be inseparable from her side. So I thought at our first meeting, so I think at the present moment.

Ellen leaned back in her chair and looked at him earnestly, almost sadly.

"Do you actually mean to say that you love Ebba?" This question was uttered with a certain deliberation.

"No, not as my heart would *like* to love her."

"Not even as it *can* love."

"Ellen!" exclaimed Uno, and again there was a flash of light in his eyes.

"Would you doom Ebba to the sad lot of being the wife of a man who could only give her the second place in his heart?"

"No, I would not do it *now*. Your words yesterday awakened in me the thought of how contemptible it would be to sacrifice her happiness for my own; for I shall never be able to love Ebba as I love —"

"Sappho!" exclaimed Ellen involuntarily; but scarcely had the word passed her lips before she repented it, and she would have recalled it at any price.

Uno started and looked at Ellen as if he doubted that he had heard aright.

"Sappho! my relative's wife! You have thus considered me capable of such baseness? I had however believed that you regarded me as an honorable man." There was something simple and dignified in Uno's whole bearing which powerfully impressed Ellen.

"Could I have done you injustice? Could I have been mistaken?" exclaimed Ellen, and offered him her hand. "Forgive me!"

"How easy to forgive you, Ellen!" replied Uno with emotion. "You have been cruelly mistaken in the object of my love; but you were right in saying that I did not love Ebba." Uno kept Ellen's hand in his, and the young girl fancied that she heard her heart beat. She drew her hand gently from his. Both were silent. Ellen bent down over her work. Uno wrote in the sand with his cane.

"What led you to the thought that I loved Sappho?" asked Uno at length.

"I saw you kneel before her," stammered Ellen.

"Ah! how appearances can deceive!" Again they both kept silence.

Ellen's eyes fell unintentionally upon that which he wrote. Uno's cane had stopped under a name which he had written in the sand, as if he pointed to it. Ellen hastily turned away her head, rose, and went in.

Uno effaced the word written in the sand, and sat there a long time absorbed in thought.

Later in the evening he approached Ellen, saying, —

"Shall I never be allowed to hear you sing? Sing this evening."

"When my betrothed comes back, then I will sing," replied Ellen, without looking up from her work.

Uno's glance darkened and he left her.

That evening, after all had retired, Ellen wrote a postscript to a letter to her betrothed. It contained these words, —

"My friend, come as soon you can. I feel a great need of seeing you again."

The three weeks which remained before Evert could come to Löda passed without anything noteworthy. Uno carefully

avoided Ellen, and had in his manner towards Ebba assumed something of the uncle. The cordial intimacy had disappeared; he no longer took part in the young people's games, but accompanied Oscar upon his excursions, and went hunting with him and the neighbors. He was with the ladies very seldom, except at meals. All saw this change, but no one attached any importance to it.

Licutenant Henrico and Magister Dahl, instead, exerted all their power to enliven the others, and succeeded. Ebba did not trouble herself at all about Uno's absence, but was joyous, full of life, and now as ever Magister Dahl's most unmanageable and most beloved pupil. Henrico was polite, cordial, sometimes tender, towards Ellen; but there was something so brotherly in this friendliness, that she received and responded to it without distrust.

One day at breakfast, when the post arrived, Ellen received a letter from Evert. She went to one of the saloon windows and opened it.

"Well, when is Ochard coming?" inquired Oscar.

"In two days," replied Ellen.

Magister Dahl took his hat and left the dining-hall. Uno went into the saloon, placed himself at the instrument and played a storm march.

One glorious moonlight night in August, when they had all gone for a promenade in the park, Ellen remained at home alone, because she felt tired and a little low-spirited besides. After the others had gone, she seated herself at the piano and abandoned herself with her whole heart to the fancies, which in a variegated throng marched through her soul. She tried through tones to give them form. The servant would have closed the glass doors to the terrace and lighted the candles, but Ellen wished to sit in the moonlight and inhale the balmy fragrance from the garden.

While she gave herself up to the dreamy delight of the hour, the promenaders had strolled round the park and returned. The young people, with Alma's governess, decided to go to the furnace to see the ore run. The Count, Countess, and Uno went into the garden. The weather was so magnificent and warm, that Sappho drew Oscar down on a bench under a pair of poplars, from whence one saw the dam shadowed with trees and shrubs, in whose mirror-like water the moon bathed its face. Sappho, who still loved her husband with the same ardent love as in youth, was glad to sit and dream at his side, especially on such a beautiful summer evening. She then in double measure enjoyed her happiness, continually the same and yet continually new.

When Sappho and Oscar seated themselves in the garden, Uno said, —

"As I am not a dreamer, allow me to leave you to the God of solitude and love." Then he went up to the house, but stopped on the terrace and listened. In the saloon a sweet and wonderful voice sang the last strophe of a ballad:

"And the song, it flew over the waves."

The tones died away gradually, like a sigh full of melody.

"Ellen," whispered a voice behind the singer, "sing that song again. O, do not refuse me the only prayer that I shall ever address to *thee!*"

Ellen turned round, and the moon's rays fell on Uno's face. There was not now that singular Southern flame in his eyes which had sometimes almost frightened her; there lay in them a prayer, touching and sorrowful. A slight trembling passed through her whole being at the "thee" which he uttered so beseechingly. The young girl knew the danger of this moment, and in order to fly it, she let her hands glide over the keys and then repeated the ballad, whose close Uno had heard.

With his hands resting on the back of her chair, Uno listened with bated breath to this sweet and melting voice. It seemed to him that his heart softened and became gentle and pure as a child while these tones soothed his ear. Again the song died away and "flew over the waves."

"Thanks, Ellen," faltered Uno, and Ellen fancied that his breath touched her hair. When she rose, he was gone. She went to the window, clasped her hands, and whispered a silent prayer to the Father above.

Two days subsequent Evert clasped his betrothed to his heart. Ellen stole to him with a shy and tender glance. Perhaps never before had he been so heartily greeted by his betrothed as this time.

Evert stayed at Löda, and Ellen appeared to him more friendly and tender than ever. A week elapsed. Uno had the day before Evert's arrival gone to Baron G——'s and had not yet returned, when a letter came saying that they could expect Count Rubens back in a few days. Count Oscar and Evert went to Holmvik early the next morning.

After they had gone, Ellen, faithful to her favorite habit, went down to the park. On reaching a hillside at the edge of the stream, where she was fond of dreaming away an unobserved moment, she stopped, for before her lay a young man outstretched on the grass. His face was turned away, but in the black curly hair and the slender frame she recognized Uno. She was just going to draw back, when an object which raised its head from the grass and seemed to wish to take a promenade up the young man's bare throat, caused her to utter a faint cry; but when Uno at this turned round, she cried, —

"For God's sake, be still, Uno. I entreat *thee*, do not move, — from mercy," added she as he made a motion with his hand to lean it on the lower part of the snake, which crawled close by him and had a glittering eye for the exposed throat.

With a few light steps the fearless girl was at his side. She had wrapped her handkerchief around her right hand, and seizing the snake rashly by the middle, she flung it into the stream. When she threw herself down on her knees beside Uno, she supported her left hand against his shoulder while she despatched the snake, without heeding the familiarity of the position she had taken. When the danger was over, she turned her face, pale from anxiety, to Uno, asking, —

"Uno, you are unhurt?"

"Yes, through *thee*." He seized her right hand, the left still rested on his shoulder. At the sound of the warm voice and this *thee*, it was as if Ellen had come back to herself; she took her hand away hastily and would have drawn back.

"Stay a moment only," said Uno beseechingly; "seat yourself at my side. Oh!" He checked himself, carried her hand to his lips and whispered: "Thanks, angel!" Then he sprang up. They now stood beside each other. She would have gone, but he said, "I will leave here to-morrow. But until my death shall I preserve the remembrance of this morning and — my saviour." He took her two hands, and pressed them violently as he added: "Will Ellen also think of this moment sometimes; think of Uno?"

"I will," faltered she.

"That is all I have the right to ask, to hope." Uno's lips pressed a hot kiss on each of her hands, and then he relinquished them.

They both walked home in silence.

The next morning Uno went to the capital.

Two months after this the marriage of the Justice Evert of Ochard and Ellen Kahn was celebrated.

The bride's dowry was one hundred

thousand riks thalers, besides fifty thousand which, through a special arrangement, constituted a sort of capital between the parties. Of the interest of the last-named amount, Ellen alone possessed the full disposal.

The bride was lovely and captivating, and the Justice the happiest of all happy mortals.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

FOUR YEARS LATER.

THE month of January, with its northern lights, its frost, its snow-covered streets, its clear, cold sun, and its amusements, approached its close, as we bring you, dear reader, one beautiful morning, into the Justice of Ochard's elegant and sumptuous abode. The young couple had enjoyed matrimonial felicity a little over four years.

They had made a journey to the Continent the first year, and on their return to Stockholm entered society with all the luxury that wealth could command.

The married pair were, it is true, the objects of many invidious remarks, but of yet more courting and flattery, and counted an untold number of friends.

Ellen was considered by one and all a gifted, captivating, and lovely woman, although somewhat too vain, for with her elegance and grace she cast others into the shade. She lived in great style, mingled in the highest circles, attended all festivities, and was regarded as one who was devoted, heart and soul, to the pleasures of society. The envious traduced her, the good-hearted kept silent, and flattery kindled its incense before the young and wealthy woman. Besides, she was regarded as a literary person, for she had published a little collection of poems which won general approbation. It can be seen from this, that Ellen belonged to those who ought to be sharply censured, for nothing gives greater offence with commonplace people than that innate superiority which can be procured neither through money nor intrigue. The natural consequence is, that one who possesses this becomes the object of calumny and persecutions.

We find the married pair in a little cabinet. Ellen sits curled up in an easy-chair, listening to her husband with an abstracted air. Evert had taken his place at a small table. Before him lay a list, upon which he made notes with a pencil.

"This evening there is the reception at President S***, and *Don Juan* besides at the Royal Opera. You cannot, my dear, miss being at both places. So make a short visit to the Opera and drive round to the President's at half past ten."

"But I assure you, Evert, that this chase from pleasure to pleasure wearies me," replied Ellen.

"My dear Ellen, think of what we owe to our position in society. I am rich, rich through you; and if we lived retired, would it not look in the eyes of the world as if I were a miser, who only thought of investing his money. And besides, what enjoyment could one then have of existence? None. Now, on the contrary, fortune gives me the opportunity of leading a life agreeable in every respect. My horses excite admiration whenever we drive out; my establishment is considered the most elegant, an actual model, after which all desire to pattern their dwellings; for a great part of the furniture is imported. I am the one who gives the *ton* in our society. People know that what I have is modern and tasteful, as well as manufactured in Paris. You again are the object of all the ladies' envy and all the gentlemen's admiration. When you appear in a company, one examines every detail of your attire; have you a new, foreign style in your dress, your mantle, or an unusual material, the other ladies will take pattern from it directly. You are young, you

are rich, you are a genius, and besides *my wife;* you ought consequently to live in the world which pays homage to you, and think that this homage is a real pleasure to me; for the applause which we reap from our fellow-beings contributes very essentially to the true value of life. Besides, you ought to consider what a great advantage it is to me to live in fine style and associate in the higher circles. I win favor, and through this it will be easy for me to get promoted before others, who neither possess my merits nor the ability to gain friends and protectors through the means which wealth affords. President S***, for example, is obliged to borrow money; he turns to me. At the next promotion he says a good word for me to the government, and I am advanced directly. I have a fine house, and people strive to get entrance to it. The result is that they have every reason in the world to favor my success. We have entirely left the subject, and I am obliged to be in court at eleven o'clock. You will thus go to the Opera this evening, where I will come for you, as I shall dine with Count O——. *Apropos,* Ellen, you really made me feel bad at the concert Tuesday, when I came to accompany you home. Goodness, how you were dressed, black as a nun!"

"My friend, one is always well dressed in black."

"May be; but for you, whom everybody knows to be *my wife,* it is necessary to dress exquisitely. When you appear at the Opera or at a concert, people say, 'Fru Ochard, the poetess!' and then they begin to survey your toilet from the greatest to the least. My pride is that you shall be dressed with a tasteful luxury. What do you intend to wear this evening?"

"I have not yet thought about it."

"Ah! my dear, you are unwarrantably indifferent to everything that ought to interest you. God knows, Ellen, what you are thinking of. I find it more and more necessary to meddle in your toilet, else it would be an utter failure. I suppose you will wear a light silk to the Opera?"

"Yes, I shall endeavor to be dressed according to your taste." Ellen smiled faintly.

"At President S***'s you must be dressed in black, for it is the first time that you are invited there. Too bad, that you persist in not having a black velvet dress, silk and *moire-antique* are so common. Now I am obliged to leave you. Have you thought of trying to win a prize in the Swedish academy? You have promised me to do so, have you not?"

"To gratify you I will make the endeavor."

"It is inexpressibly annoying that you from sheer obstinacy refuse to improvise in company. What a light would you not become in society, if you could abandon that silly resolution, which is utterly destitute of common sense." Evert rose from his chair and went to his wife, saying with a certain tenderness: "Shall my prayers not prevail upon you to fulfil my desire?"

Ellen laid her hand in his.

"In all else, Evert, I will meet your wishes; but never can you persuade me to appear in society as a juggler who amuses the company with her tricks. No, this power to dream while awake is a failing, and I do not wish to become prominent through it as some incomprehensible thing which people at once praise and censure. At your request I have written down these effusions of the moment and allowed them to be published; but every shadow of inspiration and enthusiasm would disappear, if I was doomed to improvise before these people who do not understand me. Be content with giving some of my poetical nothings to the world, and ask no more of me."

Evert looked displeased, swung on his

heel, and, muttering something about caprice and obstinacy, went into his room. An hour afterward he came out, clad in a black swallow-tail coat, ready to attend court.

Our Justice bestowed no little time upon his toilet. The part of the day which other young men in court were obliged to devote to work was employed by him in studying the cut of his coats, cloaks, cravats, vests, etc., etc. He was rich, he paid others to work for him, while he gratified his desire of appearing as a handsome and elegant young man, which no one could dispute that he was.

"I suppose you remember that Baroness Ernstein expects you at noon? I think you were to take a ride to Djurgården together? I will order the gray horses to be harnessed to the double sleigh. Adieu, my dear. Do not forget that to-morrow is the ball at his Excellency D——'s, and the day after we have a reception ourselves. You ought to devote a little consideration to your toilet for that day and also to your music." Evert kissed Ellen's brow and left the room.

The young wife remained sitting a long time as if wearied out and incapable of any motion. Her expressionless gaze was fastened on the ceiling. There lay in it something in the highest degree indifferent and fatigued, which gave a lax and soulless stamp to the whole face. She looked as if she did not think of anything, but gave herself up to a complete rest. From this waking trance she was aroused by the entrance of her maid.

"The Justice bade me tell you that Baroness Ernstein expects your Grace at twelve o'clock. It is now half past eleven. What dress will you wear?"

"Ah, Ingrid, is it you?" said Ellen. And a smile full of kindness glided over the pale features as she offered the girl her hand.

Ingrid was an orphan who had grown up in the neighborhood of Holmvik, and was some years older than Ellen. They had known each other as long back as they could remember, and Ingrid had more than once been allowed to take part in the children's plays at Holmvik, for she was the favorite of them all and especially Ellen's. When she had been confirmed, Countess Rubens engaged her as Ellen's waiting-girl. When Ellen married, Ingrid, who loved her with her whole heart, accompanied her to the new home as lady's-maid.

Ingrid had through Emy's care received an education which raised her above an ordinary servant and developed her naturally good faculties. She was now called *Mamsell* Ingrid, and had, besides the position of lady's-maid, the supervision over all the servants.

Ingrid seized the extended hand and kissed it.

"How pale my beloved mistress is to-day," said she.

"I am tired of these continual late hours, Ingrid. Ah! if I could live far from all this bustle, this so-called pleasure, in some corner, hidden and forgotten." Ellen rose. "Yes, I suppose I must dress for that sleigh-ride." She sighed. "My life is a constant toilet. My days are spent in the incessant occupation of — changing attire A useful life, heaven knows!"

"But your Grace works between times?"

"I?" Ellen smiled bitterly. "Work and I are strangers to each other. I have no time to work. There, it is a quarter to twelve; I have again barely time to get dressed.

Ingrid was the only being in whose presence Ellen allowed any reflections upon her life to escape her. If she then sometimes "thought aloud," it was because she knew that Ingrid was as mute as the walls.

At a quarter to one an elegant sleigh stopped before Baroness Ernstein's residence. The spirited and exceedingly

beautiful horses, the stately coachman, the lady who sat in the sleigh in her exquisite winter toilet, all drew the attention of the passer-by. People stopped and looked after the handsome equipage.

In the evening Ellen showed herself at the Royal Opera and was through her luxury the object of a thousand remarks. Evert came for his wife after the third act.

An hour later several gentlemen stood conversing in a group in the outer saloon at President S***'s.

"So, my dear Count, you are going to stay in Sweden through the winter," said a young Baron to Count Uno Kerner, who stood in the midst of the group.

"Yes, such is my intention," replied the Count.

"I suppose you have seen Count Oscar Kerner and Arthur Rubens?"

"Not yet. I have only been in Stockholm two days."

"They are both staying in the capital on account of the Diet."

Just then a young couple entered the saloon. All the gentlemen in the group saluted them, Uno included. It was Justice Ochard and his wife. When Ellen saw Uno, a delicate, almost imperceptible color tinged her pale cheeks. His greeting was cold and measured. He followed with his eyes the lady whose apparel was now, as always, costly and exquisite.

"Do you know Fru Ochard, Count?" asked the Baron.

"I have seen her at Rubens."

"Yes, that is true; she was brought up with them. Fru Ochard is a lady who is very much in the mode; less through her beauty, although she is very fine looking, than through her genius, her taste, and the style in which she lives. The Ochards are always to be found in the dizzy round of pleasure, and eclipse all others by their magnificence. This seems to have been the chief object of *her* ambition, to stand before all other women in the circle in which she moves. She is a lovely woman in every respect, but indisputably very vain." The gentlemen separated.

"My first judgment of Ellen was thus correct," thought Uno, who withdrew into a window recess, and regarded Ellen as she sat surrounded by a swarm of young men, with whom she gayly conversed. "The moment's triumph, — that is the aim, which these women who are reputed geniuses seek to attain. What an empty life is this foolish chase after distinctions which in themselves are worth nothing! How can a good and warm-hearted person make it the object of her life to go from one diversion to another, day and night, coveting nothing higher than to dazzle with a fine exterior! Impossible! Empty is the brain which is not able to comprehend that we ought to live for a nobler end, and empty the heart which seeks its happiness in such a worthless endeavor." Uno stole unobserved from the President's full house, and went home.

While his valet helped the Count to exchange his black coat for a dressing-gown, he said, —

"According to your order, Herr Count, I have taken books from the bookstore. Herr B—— gave me some which you had not asked for, but which he told me to bring home for you to look at."

"Very well. Lay the package on the table and place my reading-lamp beside it."

When the valet had obeyed the direction, he left the room. The Count stretched himself out on a lounge and opened the package. The first book that fell into his hands was, "Short Poems by Ellen of Ochard." He threw the book far from him with a gesture of indignation and muttered, "Everything from her breathes vanity and only vanity." He again took up the book and read: "'Ellen of Ochard.' The whole name given so that no one should doubt that

it is she. As a girl an improvisatrice, as a wife a poetess, a woman of the world and — a coquette. Bah! She has become what I predicted." He turned the leaves and opened to, "The Happiness of Home." At the sight of this title he burst into a loud laugh.

"'The happiness of home!' That is excellent! Here we have a striking proof of my assertion, that these beings with imagination can paint what they never felt, what they do not even care for in reality. They choose their subject according to what they think will strike the public, but the heart remains cold, whatever they may write about. They only calculate the effect which they are able to produce." Again the book was thrown to one side, and the Count took another, without reading a single word in Ellen's collection.

Two days afterwards there was a large and brilliant ball at the Oehards'. Ellen received her guests with the ease which intercourse with the great world bestows. Warm and cordial was the smile with which she welcomed the Rubens and Kerner families. Ebba and Alma were betrothed. The former to an amiable young man, Baron Alfred Angerfeldt, and the latter to Lieutenant Henrico; a fancy which had grown up with her, and which was entirely in harmony with Count Kerner's wishes and plans for her future.

They had already danced the first two dances. Ellen stood in the middle of a smaller saloon, conversing with Ebba, who leaned on Baron Alfred's arm. Suddenly Ebba exclaimed, "Why see there!" and smiled at the object of her surprise. Ellen turned. Uno stood bowing before the ladies. Their first meeting had been so in passing that Ellen had merely time to recognize him. He now stood before her with that cold politeness in his whole demeanor and that peculiar indifference in his glance which had so wounded her in the beginning of their acquaintance. While she welcomed him in some courteous words, the remembrance of their last meeting on the bank of the stream, and his words, "I shall always remember this moment," were vividly recalled to her soul. Could he have forgotten this parting? There was nothing in his look which gave her reason to believe the contrary. Ellen had preserved the recollection of this moment in her heart, as she had preserved everything which reminded her of the time before her marriage, when life seemed so pleasant to her. Was it these thoughts which with lightning's speed flashed through her soul, that called forth an almost melancholy expression in her face, when she greeted Uno? Or was it the certainty that he, like all the rest, would consider her a vain and foolish creature? Possibly both, we do not know. Only a few unimportant words were exchanged between them, and then Uno went to look up Sappho. In a little cabinet, where he found Emy and Sappho, he sat down.

They talked awhile about indifferent matters. Then Uno passed over to Ebba's and Alma's betrothals, their hopes for the future. Finally Emy said, —

"But tell me frankly, Uno, how do you find Ellen? Is she the same? Does she look happy?"

"I fancy that she has become somewhat paler, but she looks cheerful and contented, as one who leads a life that she considers pleasant and agreeable."

"Does she really look cheerful?" Emy rather whispered this question to herself than addressed it to Uno. Thereupon she rose and went into the large saloon.

"Do you not think that I am right, Sappho, in what I have said about Ellen's appearance?"

"No," replied Countess Kerner. "It seems to me, on the contrary, as though she was consumed by some soul suffer-

ing which she will never clothe in words, and as if the life she leads was a torment, a constraint to her."

"My dear Sappho, that comes from the fact that you so stubbornly hold fast to your endeavor to make of her a being like others, with the need of true happiness and an inner longing for something more than this empty flattery. But you are wrong; this richly endowed Ellen is a willing slave to her vanity. To satisfy the thirst for applause which governs her, through the display of her remarkable soul gifts, and to attract attention by her luxury and splendor, — these are the objects for which she lives. She has no need of love's quiet joy, and cannot conceive of the delight of an unobserved and domestic life. But so it is, all persons seek to satisfy that which constitutes their master-passion."

"Then you mean to assert that vanity is Ellen's master-passion?"

"Yes."

Just then a silk dress rustled against the door curtains. Uno looked up. It was Ellen. She had stopped in the door and looked at Uno with a sad and earnest expression; but she only remained standing a few seconds, then she continued her way through the cabinet.

The rooms were empty, the candles burned down, and the last carriage had rolled away. The servants were engaged in closing the doors and extinguishing the lights, when Evert came in to his wife, who, tired out, had thrown herself down on a sofa in a little boudoir adjoining her bedchamber.

Our Justice's face shone with satisfaction when he entered.

"It seems to me, my dear, that our ball was a brilliant affair. I have been overwhelmed with compliments. Excellency G—— said some obliging words to me. Counsellor E—— showed me genuine good-will and much politeness. President S*** pressed my hand and called me his friend; in short, I have reaped praise from all quarters. Besides this, Count Dersner said something quite flattering with regard to my choice of a wife. He praised your genius, and thought you a truly superior woman. I suppose you know that Count Dersner is married to Count Uno Kerner's sister." The Justice took Ellen's hand and kissed it warmly, adding: "It is you, my beloved Ellen, who have helped me to all these triumphs, through your distinguished qualities." He released his wife's hand, it fell down again in her lap, without Evert's perceiving or heeding her indifferent and abstracted demeanor. He continued: "After all the favor which the President and the Counsellor showed me, it is no longer a matter of doubt which of us two, Gran or I, shall become assessor in X——'s place. This intercourse with the higher society, for which I have been so solicitous, has been of great advantage to me, because it has procured me patrons. If one wishes to rise in the world, he must try to associate with those who are above him. The only thing that I should desire to speak to you about, my dear Ellen, is that you do not attach enough importance to a person's rank, but treat all alike." Here followed a long lecture about the proper and not proper, the different ways in which one ought to treat different people, the regard that ought to be paid to the impression one makes upon them, and the importance of not neglecting any opportunity of gaining those persons whose acquaintance gives repute, etc. It was a real piece of eloquence in our Justice, which turned on his desire of making an appearance and of winning approbation and success. The whole speech could be called a dissertation upon the best way of gratifying one's vanity. But when he had fully and clearly developed the subject, Evert re-

minded himself that he perhaps exposed his main weakness too much, and this was something which he was altogether too vain to desire to do. As soon as he perceived that he had allowed himself to be carried away and gone too far, he was always prepared to amend his fault by giving it a color that would place him in a fine and noble light. So even now.

"My little wife must not think that I have mentioned these rules which ought to be observed in social life, for anything but her own sake. I, as a man, do not care in the least for what people say about me. But you see I am so enamored, so smitten with you, that I desire the whole world to kneel before you as I do. It is your prosperity that I would further. That you shall be the one most highly thought of is my aim; but what they think or say about me is entirely indifferent. I know my own worth, am a man, and do not need the world's praise."

Evert had again bent down and kissed Ellen's brow. It was cold, and a sigh heaved her breast. Our Justice, like all vain persons, was extremely impatient. He required of his wife that she should adore him, that she should admire and approve all that he said and did. Ellen's passive submission, her silence, her lukewarmness, irritated and wounded him. Especially when he forgot the thoughts of satisfying his desire for approbation, which usually occupied him exclusively, and devoted some caresses to her, he found it in the highest degree ungrateful of her not to respond to these expressions of tenderness from the man for whom she ought to live and die. He accordingly rose abruptly when Ellen sighed, and said impetuously, —

"Really, my dear Ellen, you are a very singular woman. I try in every conceivable way to make your life agreeable. I surround you with everything that you can desire, introduce you into all distinguished circles, regulate my life entirely according to your well-being, and do all that I can to sweeten my wife's days; but you, you have only sighs, coldness, and indifference in response to my tender efforts to create your happiness. *I* love and adore you, and *you*, as thanks for it, show me no glimpse of true and genuine affection. I sacrifice myself entirely for you; but what have I in return? Sad and discontented looks, never a glad and grateful smile, but continually a cloudy face and solitary words; and yet, Ellen, I had counted upon something different from you; yes, I hoped that you would make some acknowledgment to a man who has no other thought than to afford you happiness." He walked up and down the room, very much provoked at his wife, and deeply moved over himself and his sacrificed love.

At this outburst Ellen rose from her half-reclining position and offered him her hand with the words, —

"Forgive me, Evert, if I am not as I ought to be, if I appear cold, and am not able to make you happy. God is my witness that I have desired nothing higher, during the four years that we have been married, than to be able to comply with your wishes and so regulate my life as to make you feel contented."

"From what you say, dear Ellen, it would seem as if you sacrificed yourself for me, and not, as the case now stands, that I am the one who makes sacrifices. But so it is; the more one does for you women, the more ungrateful you are. No, a husband must be an egotist or a despot for you to value him. If one is self-denying and good, he gets caprice as a recompense." And with this the Justice went into his bedroom.

Ellen bent down her weary head and wept quietly; soon she dried her tears and thought, —

"Perhaps it is my fault. If I should tell him how much this manner of life tormented me, how I suffer from it, he

might make some retrenchment, and from love of me propose a quiet, domestic life. That he loves me, I cannot doubt. Yes, he loves me very much, and certainly thinks that I cannot be happy except in this whirl. He complains of the lack of love on my side. Ah! I will tell him that this lack shall not be found if I am allowed to live only with him, surrounded by his tenderness, separated from all this bustle, unobserved by the world, indispensable to him." She rose, laid her hand on her heart and smiled with a pained expression, as she continued in thought: "Is this heart actually not capable of a warmer feeling than the one I cherish for Evert? O God! protect me; may I never live to see the moment when I again doubt the depths of the love which bind me to my husband. Shall I have struggled in vain, believed that I have come victorious from the strife, and yet not have done so? That would be terrible." Ellen sank down on her knees, folded her hands over her breast and prayed, prayed so warmly and fervently, with the same tender trust with which a child lifts up its prayer to God.

It was a strange sight to see this lady, adorned with lace, silk, and jewels, alone in the elegant boudoir and absorbed in humble prayer, forgetful of all the vanity and folly which surrounded her, with her whole soul fastened upon the Father to whom she always flew in the moment of trouble.

When she again rose, her features were calm and serene; and when she entered the bedroom, there was something so mild and almost glorified in her appearance, that it was easy to see that she had found in prayer both consolation and strength.

The following morning we find the married pair sitting in the little boudoir.

"Dear Evert, I was so deeply troubled yesterday on account of your leaving me in displeasure, and because I thought I could conclude from your words that the life we lead is not fully in accordance with your taste, but that you think I cannot be happy unless I live in society, therefore I desire a right understanding between us, and that you may clearly read my heart."

"Well, I have no objection; but I wonder what I shall find to read in it; probably something very fanciful and romantic, but nothing of reality." Evert spoke in a snappish tone.

"Evert, not that tone." She laid her hand on his arm, and leaned her head a little to one side, so that she looked him in the eyes. "What I have to say only concerns our happiness, and I wish to prove to you by my words the sincerity of my affection. Evert, you are mistaken in regard to my taste, if you think that this life in the midst of the world's pleasures pleases me. No, I love the retired family life, full of love and peace. I do not find my happiness in these dissipations, this senseless pursuit of profitless amusements. On the contrary, I suffer from it, I feel weary, distressed, and unhappy, for it does not seem to me that I can answer before God and humanity for the way in which my days are spent, without benefit to myself or any other being. Ah! Evert, how different our life would seem if we left society, drew back within the narrow but far pleasanter sphere of quiet family life, and employed all these sums which are now wasted upon folly for the benefit of those in need; if we tried to do good with our wealth, instead of spending our time in this unprofitable way." She paused, for she had sought in vain for any approval in her husband's face; on the contrary, this face assumed an expression of more and more resentment. When she ceased, he stood up and began to pace the floor, while he responded to her proposition in the following manner:—

"Is it not as I said, that you would solace me with a multitude of absurd fancies. My dear Ellen, your imagination is just the thing when you write your poems, but do not let it lead your reason, for then you come out with sheer nonsense. Ellen! what name will you give this whole tirade about domestic happiness, a quiet life, and all that? You are just the one for such a manner of life!" He laughed scornfully. "No, my dear, in a month's time you would fill my ears with continual complaints about the dull time you had, and we left alone with our domestic felicity should be ready to die of *ennui*. I know you better than you know yourself, and consequently can tell best what kind of an existence is most in accordance with your disposition and inclinations. Besides, your common sense ought to tell you that a man with my expectations cannot very easily place himself in some obscure corner of the world, to play turtle-dove with his wife, but is obliged to be in connection with persons of the same standing as himself. And again, I do not wish to pass for a miser, who like a dragon keeps guard over his treasure; and your delicacy ought to have withheld you from any remarks about the way in which I manage money, or from insinuating that I had squandered it." With this he went his way, to avoid all further conversation upon the subject.

Ellen, with her superior understanding, realized full well that she could alter nothing in their position. She saw clearly that Evert, under the pretext that he lived only for his wife and ordered his life in such a way as to make her feel happy and contented, in reality did nothing but follow his own taste. She felt something like indignation at the thought of her husband's ignoble behavior. She leaned back against the sofa and reflected with discouragement that she had no other choice than to continue to be dragged from one divertisment to another.

"I have taken the solemn vow before God to contribute to my husband's happiness with all my power. Well, then, this happiness he can only find by shining in the little and trivial; what matters it if I die from the lack of tranquillity and domestic happiness, if he is only contented? It is not worth while for me to have so much regard for myself. His vanity is more to him than his love for me. I shall finally freeze to death in this cold splendor; but what then? I have no children, not a being to whom I am indispensable, least of all to my husband. What then is life really worth? Nothing."

She went to one of the windows and looked up at the clear sky. What was she thinking of? Of her departed parents. She stood so a long time, absorbed in sorrowful reflections, when at last her eyes were directed to the street, and she saw a neatly dressed woman carrying a child in her arms.

"What would I not give," she thought, "if I was as rich as that poor woman and possessed a being to whom I was all. Ah, how different would life seem to me, if I had a child to live for, to love and take care of. I should then not stand so alone and forsaken as now. I should have an aim for my existence. But thou, O God, hast not considered me worthy of such a happiness."

Ingrid entered.

"Countess Rubens wishes to see you; but she is waiting in the saloon, for I told her that the Justice was here."

Ellen hastened out to Emy, who with true motherly tenderness clasped her in her arms. Then she took Ellen's head in her hands, lifted it up and looked searchingly into her eyes.

"My beloved child, I have come here especially to talk to you confidentially, and to ask you immediately, without any circumlocution, *are you really happy?*"

There was so much tenderness, such true motherly anxiety, in Emy's voice

and glance, that Ellen could have melted into tears and on her breast poured out all that distressed her; but the practice of governing her feelings, which she had had from childhood, now also prevailed. She did not wish with her sorrows to trouble the one who had taken care of her with so much love. She did not wish Emy to think of her husband with displeasure; and she considered it her duty to preserve faithfully everything that concerned him within her own breast. She therefore kept her pangs to herself, and answered in her usual gentle way, —

"If I do not always feel happy, it is because of my dreamy and imaginative disposition, not of any other circumstance. Evert loves me, is always good and kind to me, and tries to the best of his ability to dissipate the shadows which my natural inclination to melancholy sometimes calls forth."

"Are you now as frank with me as you would have been with your mother, if she lived? Ellen, at this moment it is her spirit that speaks to you through me. Answer me as if you stood before her."

"I will do so." Ellen took Emy's hand, laid it on her heart, and said with deep earnestness: "I remember a woman whom I regarded as the ideal of a wife. She answered me once, when I asked her what cloud it was that shadowed her brow when she one day came out from her husband, 'Child, do not ask me. That which is between man and wife, no third person, even if it is a mother, should ever seek to find out. The differences which arise ought to remain between them and God. A third is there one too many, because the third can never be fully impartial.' Can you tell me, Aunt, who this wise and noble-minded wife was? It was Emy Rubens; and every word of hers have I preserved in the depth of my heart."

The Countess kissed Ellen in silence. Ingrid came in at the same moment and announced that Herr R—— and Herr N—— had come to practise a trio that was to be played in the evening at Captain Ochard's, Evert's cousin.

"I will wait here a moment, and then come out in the saloon to hear the trio," said the Countess. "You go, dear Ellen, to the gentlemen who are waiting for you," added she, smiling.

Ellen left the room, and the Countess made a sign to Ingrid to come nearer.

"Ingrid, your mistress does not look happy. What do you consider the reason to be?"

"The unquiet life that she leads, Countess," replied Ingrid, fearlessly. "Her Grace has from childhood preferred to live still and quiet within the family, and now the Justice drags her out among people, from pleasure to pleasure, and in the mean time visits, rehearsals, and the care of the toilet. She never has an undisturbed moment; is never allowed to abandon herself to solitude, calm, and quiet; never any rest. The Justice has no time left to sit familiarly alone with his wife. Without consulting her own pleasure, weary, indifferent, and perfectly submissive to his will, her Grace lets it all pass, although it destroys her happiness. But it is not enough with this," added Ingrid, weeping; "people consider *her* vain and a coquette; they in general pity the Justice, and regard him as the one who is led completely by her. Ah! Countess, I have often thought of telling you all this, but always waited for you to ask me."

"Thank you, Ingrid," said the Countess, giving the true-hearted girl her hand. "I need not ask you to be tender and affectionate to Ellen, for I know that you are so with heart and soul."

"Who would not love her?" replied Ingrid, and kissed the Countess's hand. "But it makes me so sad to see her growing pale and pining away, without my being able to do anything for her comfort and happiness."

"Is the Justice at home, do you know?"

"I should think so, as his droschka has not yet come."

"Ask him if I can see him for a few moments."

Ingrid went out, and in a moment or two Evert entered the cabinet with a hurried step, and greeted the Countess with all the grace and politeness which he as a man of the world could command.

"You have desired to speak to me. Can I be of any service to you?"

"Be seated, Evert; what I have to say concerns Ellen wholly."

"Evert took a chair with a look of displeasure that he was not able to conceal behind the obliging smile."

"Ellen does not look well. When I came to the capital I found her appearance changed, and during the months that have since elapsed she has become still paler. This, my dear Evert, has induced me to speak to you, so that you, who love her so sincerely, may persuade her to limit her pleasures a little. These continual late hours and excitements have had an injurious effect upon her, and must be prevented, if your wife's health is dear to you."

"What you are pleased to say truly astonishes me, for I think I can assure you that Ellen has never been so happy and so completely in her right element as since she married and gained the opportunity of extending her social sphere. Without wishing to doubt the correctness of your judgment, I venture to assert, that for Ellen, with her visionary character, it is necessary to live among people, to be in the midst of the world's diversions, for she would otherwise, if left to herself, sink into a melancholy, dreamy state, that would not only undermine her health, but utterly destroy our domestic happiness."

"Domestic happiness? Dear Evert, do you think that any such thing can come in question between a couple who scarcely spend two hours of the day in each other's society, when the wife flies from one pleasure and pastime to another, and the husband in his direction is first in the world of folly and the leader of the ton?"

"Permit me to drop this subject," said the Justice, always polite, but with an air of manly decision which he so well knew how to assume when he saw fit. "Believe me, one person can never rightly judge another. That which in your eyes can appear as a folly, would, if you could place yourself in my position, obtain quite another aspect. Be convinced that Ellen's husband has sufficient affection for his wife not to act heedlessly." He sighed and assumed a melancholy expression as he continued: "God best knows, that if I could live a retired life without the danger of Ellen's often morbid fancies casting a gloom upon our home, I would do it willingly, but — experience has shown me that I cannot." He drew a deep sigh.

Emy rose. A higher color than usual burned on her cheeks, and with a tone not entirely free from irony, she said, —

"It would seem from this, my dear Evert, that you sacrificed yourself completely for your wife's welfare, and solely for the promotion of this associated with all these noble families who in wealth and position stand so high above you."

"Ellen has always been accustomed to such society while living with you, and so I consider it my duty to do everything that will enable her to follow her habit and continue to live in the same circles," replied Evert, who did not observe the Countess's ironical tone.

"And probably you also consider it your duty to ruin yourself in this irrational competition with the richest families in the land. My good Evert, you drive your duties so far in this case, that one can only think that — you entirely forget them. Farewell!"

The Countess elevated her head proudly,

and left him deeply wounded and provoked; but he had no idea of showing his resentment before Countess Rubens, for nothing in the world would tempt him to hurt himself in the estimation of the rich and noble family. But he felt really angry with Ellen. It was her fault that the Countess did not consider *his* wife the happiest of women. It was Ellen's duty to represent him as the model of a married man, and to tell her foster-mother that she loved to live as they now did, for she ought always to be thankful for the enjoyable life which he afforded her. Should he, who during his whole youth had dreamed of the happiness of gaining an opportunity by a rich marriage of gratifying his taste, his love of display, his desire for approbation, his ambition, now because of a wife's fantastic visions of an idyllic and monotonous happiness doom himself to renounce all the joy that wealth could yield his vanity? That would be to resign all the success, triumph, and enjoyment of life! No, he would drain the intoxicating cup which was presented to his desire of approbation, cost what it would. And as to Ellen, he would once for all make it clear to her what, according to his opinion, was her duty.

With this wise resolution he was about to proceed to court, when Ingrid opened the doors of the saloon for an elegant lady.

"Her Grace is engaged in rehearsing for the evening, but if the Baroness will step in and wait, she will soon be at leisure."

Evert hastened to meet Baroness Ernstein, a lady who was much courted in social life, and regarded as one of the most beautiful women in the capital.

Before we give an account of the following interview, we must mention that the Baroness was of a noble, but poor family. In her first youth Evert and she had been attached to each other with a lively fancy, but he was altogether too worldly to care for love in a cottage. He saw that this love would only be a hindrance to him, and the result was that he broke off the tender connection, and the Baroness in pique married the richest, shallowest, and ugliest of barons. Many years had since elapsed, and the Baroness and Evert had scarcely met, until within the last two years, when Baroness Augusta Ernstein had approached Ellen, with much goodwill and an accommodating politeness.

Evert, in the years that had passed since he was enamored with the Countess, had undergone an essential change. The liveliness of feeling which belonged to his first youth had been entirely smothered by his all-conquering vanity. He had become a perfect man of the world, and had also acquired the worldling's aridity of feeling. He was not capable of a pure, warm, and unselfish affection. To live to appear a distinguished person was his aim, but he did nothing to become such in reality. This is the endeavor of the vain. All they do goes to present to the world the image of the good, the gifted, the magnificent, brilliant, and artistic, while in themselves they are nothing of what they would seem to be. There is no character more unreliable, more faithless and changeable, than that which is ruled by the desire of winning the approval of all. Flatter such a person's vanity, and you are an ideal; wound it, and you become a monster. Promote its satisfaction, and he kneels before you; stand in its way, and he rends you, sullies your honor, and commits any base action, if he can only get you out of the way.

All tender feelings for the Baroness were thus extinguished in Evert's breast, and to him she was only a woman, rich, noble, courted, and admired. These qualities made her a worthy object of his attention. The favor which she be-

stowed on him was always flattering, because it showed that he was a man better endowed than others; for hitherto the Baroness had distinguished none.

It was the first time since he bade Baroness Augusta farewell as a lover, that they found themselves alone together. When he came towards her she blushed, perhaps because she yet, in the depths of her heart, retained the remembrance of the love which they had cherished for each other.

"I desired to see Ellen," said she with a forced smile, "but did not expect to meet her husband."

"Is this meeting then so painful to you, Baroness?" said Evert in a sentimental tone; for like most vain persons he was a good actor. He carried her hand with animation to his lips.

"By no means; but an unlooked-for *tête-à-tête* with a person whom one does not expect to meet always surprises." She was now able to command herself. She had again become a woman of the world. "The reason of my call to-day is that I desired to consult Ellen in reference to a fancy-dress ball which I intend to give. She has such exquisite taste, that I do not know of any one who can compare with her in this respect."

"A fancy-dress ball! That will be something exceedingly piquant. Shall I not be considered worthy to be with you in the consultation? I remember a time when you thought I possessed good taste also, and often consulted it." Evert looked at Augusta with a melancholy expression, and a highly effective suppressed sigh followed.

"With regard to the gentlemen's costumes it would be of great advantage to learn your opinion; but, in all that concerns the ladies, I consider Ellen to be fully competent."

"I remember a young lady who some years ago always appealed to my judgment in the choice of colors for her attire; but it seems as if this lady had now forgotten the confidence she then had in me." Evert again seized the Baroness's hand, adding, "Shall I not dare to hope that I may be a friend of the Augusta who once — "

"Was a thoughtless girl. Herr Justice, I have done what is better; I have chosen your wife for a friend. Besides, sir, it is wisest for us both to occupy ourselves as little as possible with what has been, and more with what is, instead. And the thing nearest at hand is, my fancy-dress ball. As I have really a very high opinion of your taste, you would oblige me if I could count upon you in the council I intend to hold with some friends to-morrow evening, and to which I desired the pleasure of Ellen's company. You are more than happy, Ochard, in having such a richly gifted wife."

"But I might have been happier still if — "

"If you had had a princely rank and fortune. True enough. We mortals are never contented. Do we meet this evening at Captain Ochard's? And may I expect you and Ellen to-morrow evening?" The Baroness rose.

"You can always count upon me," said Evert with his hand on his heart. "We will be at my cousin's this evening."

"Adieu! Remember me to Ellen." The Baroness bowed her beautiful head, and Evert followed her to the door.

The programme was arranged for the fancy-dress ball, the invitations issued, and all those who were to appear in costume, that is to say the dancing portion of the guests, had been extremely busy. Our Justice most of all, for he desired a really exquisite costume for Ellen and himself. All his thoughts had been taken up by this weighty subject. There had been as much plotting and intriguing as if it had been a matter of the highest importance

to the state. Each one had done his best to eclipse the other.

The great day dawned at last which was to witness the result of all this rivalry and intrigue. Among the first guests in costume who presented themselves at the ball were two couples dressed as Italian peasants. These were Ebba Rubens and Alma Kerner, with their lovers. The saloon set apart for those in costume was gradually filled, from whence they were to enter the ball-room two by two, while the band played a march.

Their number was nearly complete, they were only waiting for the Ochards. At last they arrived. Evert was dressed as a knight of the time of Louis XIV.; the costume of purple velvet embroidered with gold, white satin small-clothes, and silk hose; Ellen as a lady of the same period, in white satin and red brocade. Their costumes were so magnificent with the rich garniture of precious stones and the expense that had been bestowed upon them, that they nearly cast all others into the shade. The march was led by Count Uno and Baroness Ernstein. He was a knight, she a lady of the time of the Crusades.

Never had Ellen looked so well, so almost beautiful, as in the dress she now wore. Probably Uno thought so too, for his eyes rested on her the whole evening, and that with so earnest a gaze, that Ellen, like one magnetized, was drawn irresistibly in the direction where he sat. Even when she did not see him, she felt the whole weight of that penetrating look. The festivity was at its height and the ball far advanced before Uno approached Ellen; at last, during an interval between the dances, he went to her.

"Beautiful lady, have you any dance disengaged for a wandering knight?"

Before she had time to answer, Evert, who stood behind her chair, replied, —

"To a knight of the cross I resign my right to the next waltz."

Just then the waltz struck up, and Uno said in a voice that trembled slightly, —

"May I avail myself of this resignation?"

Ellen gave him her hand with a graceful inclination of the head.

It was the first time that Ellen danced with Uno. Not a word was exchanged between them. Once only had Ellen raised her eyes and met his, but lowered them as hastily, almost dazzled by his expression. When he took her back to her seat, at the end of the waltz, he asked in a low voice, —

"Ellen, have you no other dance free?"

"No, not one."

He took his place beside her.

"Who, in your opinion, is the most beautiful woman here?" asked he in an indifferent tone.

"Indeed that is not hard to say," answered she. "In my eyes Alma Kerner is the most beautiful."

"And yet so simply attired."

"Ah! one endowed by nature with so much beauty does not need the assistance of art."

"So you only consider those to need a magnificent attire who are less richly gifted with beauty?"

"Yes, certainly. Art must then cover the natural deficiency."

"But I know many ladies who do not need magnificence in order to be beautiful, and yet surround themselves with it."

"Then their beauty must be of the kind that needs a full and brilliant toilet to appear to advantage."

"Not all. You, for example." He now looked at her again with that at once sharp, warm, and penetrating expression. She reddened slightly, but replied without the least constraint, —

"You cannot mean to go so far in politeness as to count me among the beautiful?"

"Yes, I certainly do." Uno said this in a tone so simple and free from gal-

lantry that it almost took away the flattery in the words. "And you are just one of those who are as beautiful in a simple toilet as in a brilliant one. Why then prefer all this finery, these ribbons and jewels, which change a woman's attire into a specimen of all the inventions of folly? If I was a woman, young and beautiful as you, I would never display anything of the fashion journal in my dress. I would adorn myself with my genius, my youth, and my happiness, but not with precious stones and lace. You possess the three treasures that I have named; why then stoop to be a doll?"

"We are all dolls in the evening; large children, who adorn ourselves for a moment's pleasure."

"But you are the finest."

"Possibly, although I do not think so; but at a fancy-dress ball we always strive to render our meed of homage to the hostess by the magnificence of our costume."

"It does not become you to take part in such a strife."

"You mean to say by this that I ought not to take part in the fancy-dress ball."

"O yes, but not as one who wishes to surpass all others in show and folly. Besides, what I now say does not merely refer to this evening. You are always in the arena of vanity."

Not even now did Ellen's face change. She maintained a calmness and composure which was almost habitual with her in society. With a charming smile she answered, —

"Is not vanity one of woman's inherited sins? Do not ask then that I shall be more free from it than the rest of my sex."

Uno leaned against the back of Ellen's chair. He whispered, —

"A woman of your genius ought to be ambitious, but not vain. She ought to despise to be a parlor doll, when she might be a distinguished person through her genius. Applause ought never to outweigh esteem, nor the praise of the moment that universal respect which is felt for a quiet but useful life."

"Give me genius and I will then become ambitious," said Ellen, gayly.

"What God has bestowed, no other needs to give you."

The conversation was here interrupted by the music. Ellen was led away in the dance, and Uno went to seek his partner.

A few days after the ball at Baroness Ernstein's there was a reception at Justice of Ochard's. When Evert met his wife in the saloon, he burst out, —

"Good gracious, Ellen, how you are dressed! You look just as if you did not expect company, and yet you know that I have invited several members of the 'Riddahus,'* besides other influential representatives. To them I shall this evening present my wife, the poetess Ellen of Ochard, and in such a toilet! My dear, you cannot have seen yourself in the glass; just look here!" He led her to a large mirror. "Do you really think that you are dressed with the elegance that ought to distinguish you? My dear Ellen, I am truly sorry that you pay so little regard to my ideas; and yet you ought to have an unlimited confidence in them, the same as every one else has. You are the only one who impugns my judgment and discrimination in all that concerns fine tact."

"My dear," replied Ellen mildly, "it is a fancy of mine to be simple to-day, let me follow it. I shall try to compensate with my music for what is lacking in my toilet; are you not satisfied with this?"

"I do not see why you should look so exceedingly simple just to-day, when I

* Corresponding to the House of Lords in England.

desired to show you to advantage. Look at yourself, your appearance is very ordinary."

Ellen contemplated her image in the glass.

"It seems to me that my attire, though simple, is in very good taste. Is not this lilac barege pretty, and Ingrid has certainly arranged my hair very nicely?"

"I should have nothing to say against your dress or hair, if you wore a tasteful and elegant head-dress of ribbon or velvet, and if the monotony of your attire was relieved by a breast-knot fastened with your beautiful ruby brooch, and if you were bracelets on your wrists as well as a richer lace set, which would give something ethereal and noble to that intolerable barege. These little changes are soon made, and *I desire* you to make them."

Ellen sighed and would have complied with her husband's *desire*, had not Baroness Ernstein just then arrived. When they had greeted the Baroness, Evert said, smiling, as he pointed to his wife, —

"What do you think of Ellen's toilet to-day? Does she not rather resemble a lady's-maid than a hostess who is to receive company?"

"Not at all. Ellen is charming just as she is. Her appearance is very harmonious and original; for simplicity enhances the noble beauty of her features. There is a delicate coquetry in the choice you have this evening made, and you are so lovely in this simple attire that you could never be more so if you appeared in a *grande toilette*."

All further comment on this highly important subject was deferred, on account of the arrival of several guests.

Ellen, who possessed an unusual facility on the piano, and both a poetic and musical comprehension besides, was a real treasure to the music-loving. This evening she played in a trio for piano, violin, and violoncello. Uno came in during its performance, without Ellen's observing him. After the trio she played something of Chopin, after which Baroness Ernstein sang two romances.

When Ellen left the instrument she became aware of Uno's presence and saluted him. While the Baroness was singing he approached the young hostess.

"Does Ellen never sing nowadays?" asked he.

"Never in company."

"Why not? Therein you do wrong."

"I have never learned to sing. I possess no especial voice, and therefore it can never enter my mind to sing before a large gathering. I go so far, that I think it would be impossible for me to utter a note if I knew that there were many listening to me."

"But still I have heard you sing, and I can solemnly assure you, without flattery, that no singing ever made a deeper impression upon me."

"If I dared to believe your words, I should attribute it to the circumstance that I then sang for myself, without suspecting that any one listened. When I am alone, it appears to me sometimes as if I wished to breathe out my soul in song, something which I neither could nor would do before a whole society."

"You are afraid to let the world look into your soul."

"Yes, I belong to the number of those reserved people, towards whom you feel an actual antipathy," answered Ellen, and smiled mischievously.

"Ah! you have a good memory. Yes, it is true, I do not love reserved characters. You are thus very reserved?"

"Yes, very."

"And yet Sappho said she had never known a franker person than Ellen," said Uno.

"That is also true. When I approve or disapprove a thing, I always express myself frankly. I cannot be induced to

praise with a word what my heart rejects."

"I have had proof of this."

A moment afterwards Baroness Augusta had taken her place beside Count Uno, and they were soon engaged in a lively conversation. Ellen stood at a little distance, talking earnestly with two elderly gentlemen and a lady by the name of Fru K***, who was much spoken of for her culture. Just as the Baroness was speaking with ecstasy about Naples, she said to Uno, —

"Is not Ellen charming?"

"Yes, indeed. At this moment her face has both life and feeling. What are they speaking of?"

"Dante's *Divina Commedia*. I do not know anything about it, for I cannot speak Italian, and have never read Dante; but for those four who have read the distinguished poet, the conversation is probably interesting. What I admire is Ellen's appearance."

"And I her simplicity for the day."

"Yes, is it not truly becoming to her? Yet I would not advise her to dress so all the time, for it would then have a touch of affectation. No, may she, our little poetess, show that she is also a woman by adorning herself like the rest of us. I cannot bear to see literary women careless in their appearance or dressed with a studied simplicity. Their intellectual pride shines through the much-praised humility, and I fancy that I see written upon it in large characters, My genius is so great that I despise every other ornament."

"I would like to assert that the simple and the great are inseparable. A gifted and distinguished woman ought to show just through the simplicity of her appearance that she is above frivolity."

"God preserve us from such perfection and distinguished geniuses! I cannot endure them. We are all children of folly, and I like to see human weaknesses go hand in hand with human virtues. Count Uno, I can never come to admire a genius clad in tow-cloth, or a moralist in sackcloth and ashes."

Uno laughed.

"Then you advocate the manner of life which Fru Ochard follows?"

"Advocate! That has nothing to do with it; but I do not see how she could take it otherwise. Young, rich, beautiful, and endowed with all the qualities that make one agreeable in society, it is but natural that she should draw the advantage from these gifts. Or would you wish her, with her poetical mind, to settle down as a hermit in a large city?"

"Not by any means; but I wish that every married woman, handsome or ugly, rich or poor, should first and foremost know how to value domestic happiness; that she should be able to promote and enjoy the delight of family life, making pleasure a secondary consideration, not the main object."

"You men are indeed strange beings. You desire that we women shall be free from all the faults which you yourselves possess. Thus, for example, you are continually talking about women's vanity and what slaves we are to the fashion, but it never enters your minds that you are equally so. At one time you wear cloaks so long that you can scarcely walk; at another they are so short that you get the rheumatism. Only think of all the varieties of coats, vests, and capes, etc, etc., and then tell me if the two sexes cannot give each other the hand in this respect and acknowledge, 'We are great fools on both sides.' But that is only a trifling matter. We women have a limited vanity which extends merely to our toilet and our amiable efforts to be agreeable; but yours, it goes through all your actions. You call it ambition. Ah, that is a beautiful sign-board on a great fault; a fine word behind which many mean deeds are concealed. To gratify your desire for distinction, you

sacrifice everybody and everything. You lend yourselves to slander, cabals, and machinations against those who stand in your way. You betray king, religion, and people, if you can only win popularity by it. You betray friends and parents, break the holiest obligations, and sell your convictions for a star or the prospect of promotion. Hapless the one who stands in the way of your vanity, who is a hindrance to it, or who wishes to contest a never so little victory. You try to injure him in every conceivable way, public and private, careless of the means you employ, in order to gratify your envy and your revenge. Yes, Count, our vanity if compared with yours stands in the same relation to it as a child to a giant. Think of the streams of blood your vanity has cost the world. For a Napoleon to gain an immortal name, millions of human lives have been sacrificed; and yet you talk of our desire of applause. Be still! for should we make up our accounts on this point, you would be forced to acknowledge with horror that your 'noble ambition' was very much like a bloodthirsty hyena, while our love of approbation confined itself to a little rouge, a few jewels, and a coquettish smile."

"In all that you have now said you are perfectly right; but it has changed nothing in my assertion, that woman ought to place domestic happiness before the desire of amusing herself. From vain mothers are born vain sons, and according to your own picture this is something that we ought to fear. Therefore women should have another aim than to be thoughtless fools in the great madhouse of vanity."

"Very true; but if fate, which sometimes takes strange freaks, gives a woman a husband who knows as little of domestic happiness as I of the customs in the moon, what shall she then do? Compel him to be happy in a way that is contrary to his nature? I assure you that this would be a fruitless effort. If, in addition to this, he married for money and to gain an opportunity of leading a life which satisfies all the requirements of his vanity, what course shall the wife then adopt? Why, follow her husband quite dutifully. They are like a pair of horses harnessed to the car of folly; when one draws, the other must draw too, and for the ignorant beholder it is difficult to decide which of the two horses forced the other to go, from the beginning."

"I think you now go a little too far in your attack upon our vanity," said the Count, who was amused by the Baroness's lively manner of calumniating his sex.

"May be; but if this is so, it comes from the fact that I have seen so much that is contemptible in you men, occasioned by pure vanity. So, for example, I knew a man who married a lovely young girl because she was a fine pianist. After she became his wife it was his highest joy to have her shine with her talent. She had to play early and late, at all times and in all places, because the praise that she received flattered his vanity. That was his way of being happy with his wife. The vain man did not conceive that the woman had a heart, warm and loving, and in vain would she have attempted to make him comprehend it. I knew another, who was a very learned and cultivated man, and sufficiently distinguished in his department to be in no need of striving for anything more than the respect that was rendered him, but who, nevertheless, besieged the court and the nobility and made himself a laughing-stock for all thinking people through his slavish officiousness; all the while speaking of orders and ribbons with the greatest contempt. He finally obtained an order, and came very near losing his reason in his delight! But it would be an endless task to enumerate all the examples of petty

and contemptible vanity in you men; so we will return to the Oehards. Whieh of them do you eonsider to be the one who is passionately devoted to the frivolous and prodigal manner of life that you censure?"

"The eause of it naturally proceeds from the wife, for in such cases it is always she who prevails; but still I consider him suffieiently vain to eomply very readily with her notions, and perhaps also, in certain eases, to share her love of display."

"O yes, there we have it! It is woman's fault, must be woman's, eannot possibly be man's. How eould he, this image of God, have any weaknesses? Your self-love, my dear sir, is really ridiculous."

"Then you mean to say that Fru Oehard is compelled by her husband to be the most elegant woman, the first who adopts a new fashion, and the one who displays the greatest magnifieenee in her attire?" He smiled eontemptuously.

"Please remember my eomparison of the horses. Now when Ochard sets off at full speed on vanity's broad road, and Ellen is harnessed with him, what remains for her but to run too? You ought to have heard him when I eame; he was in half despair over Ellen's simple dress. Look at her just now as she sits there; does she seem as if she was entertained here?"

Uno followed her advice, and diseovered Ellen sitting in an easy-chair, pale and tired out. She looked indifferently before her, while a young foreigner was talking to her.

"Well, how do you think she looks? Perhaps happy to be admired by Herr Canovi?"

"She looks fatigued. I believe however that some little personal dislike lies at the bottom of your severity towards Oehard."

"Personal?" The Baroness threw her head baek and looked at him in surprise. Then she burst out laughing. "I bet anything that superlative fool Oehard tries to make people believe I have been in love with him."

"Why say *have been* instead of *am?*" whispered a young man on the other side of the Baroness, who had sat there the whole of the time they were eonversing, without her observing it. It was her brother in-law.

"Ah! is that you, Hugo?" said she, and turned to the young man with an almost haughty inelination of the head. "I assure you that I am sufficiently at home in the rules of language not to eonfound a present with a past time. If Oehard says that I *have been* in love with him, his words contain a ridieulous boast; if he asserts that I *am* so, then they eomprise an affront." She rose and left the two gentlemen.

Some days after this Ellen and her husband were sitting at the breakfast-table. Evert was silent, and when he said anything it was in a erabbed manner. He had felt ill-disposed towards his wife ever sinee the eonversation with Countess Rubens. He eould by no means forgive Ellen for the faet that Emy did not eonsider her perfeetly happy, or him as the ideal of a married man. Without comprehending the eause, Ellen had pereeived his state of mind. If she had regarded life with less indifferenee, and had not considered their domestie eondition past remedy, she would probably have made some inquiries of her husband, and tried through her tenderness to dispel the eloud from his brow. Now, on the contrary, she had, sinee her fruitless attempt to induee him to saerifice some of these empty pleasures for their mutual happiness, eome to so sorrowful a eonclusion, that she regarded as futile every effort on her part to spread eomfort and joy in the home, as her husband did not place any value on quiet domestic happiness. She had resolved to live in a way that seemed most in accordanee with his

tastes, seeking only in prayer the consolation she needed and the strength to endure a course of life so directly in opposition to her nature and all that she had dreamed and imagined of the joys of family life. Not content with leaving her no choice but to continue this killing manner of life, he wished to assert both before her and others that he did it because she could not be happy in any other way. Her husband's whole conduct showed plainly that he neither desired nor intended to make any change in the course he had planned. Evert drank his coffee in silence. Finally he looked up and said quite suddenly, —

"I suppose that poem which you were to write about Gustaf Adolf will never be ready. It *might* gain the prize; but you, with your self-love, affect to despise such a distinction. You know that it would give me pleasure, and therefore you do not care anything about it."

"I thought you had a better opinion of me; for you know full well, in your heart, that I would willingly do anything that could afford you joy. A proof of this is that my poem is already written."

"Really! Then I suppose I must ascribe this happy circumstance to some impulse from other persons."

"Why speak with this bitterness, Evert? You know right well that what I have done in this case was solely for your sake." Ellen offered him her hand, but he did not accept it, and merely said, —

"You are too good!" He approached the door leading to his own room. "Send the manuscript to me." With this he went in.

In a few minutes afterwards Ellen intended to go in to her husband with the manuscript, but was checked by the sound of voices in his room.

"Then you promise me to attack Gran right sharply in that article, and I give you my word in return that you shall be promoted before him, although he, as an older man, might be more entitled to it." Ellen heard these words uttered by some one inside. She did not reflect much upon them, but sent Evert's servant in with the manuscript, and gave herself up to the pleasure which so seldom occurred to her of being a few moments undisturbed.

The next evening but one Ellen found herself alone at home. Evert was at the "Riddarhus"; she had denied herself to visitors, and had resolved to spend the evening alone by herself, when Ingrid entered, —

"Baroness Ernstein wishes to see your Grace. She says that you will certainly receive her, so much the more, as the Justice told her that you were at home."

"Bid the Baroness welcome," replied Ellen, and rose to go into the saloon.

"It is unnecessary, my friend, here I am; we need not meet with great ceremony in the saloon," exclaimed the Baroness. "But you must not imagine that I come alone. No, God preserve you from spending a whole evening in my company; in half an hour you will have the house full of people, but an entirely new society, namely, some distinguished *literati*, besides Count Uno Kerner and Sappho. We shall have a charming little *soirée*, with music and poetry. Just the man to please you."

In a half-hour from that time there was a little company of ten persons. They had music, conversed about literature, and for the first time Ellen found that even social life can have its delights; yet this was no *grande societé*, but a select little gathering of gifted persons. Ellen was animated and spoke with an enthusiasm which rendered her beautiful.

"Could Ellen not be persuaded, if we all united and asked her to improvise?" asked Sappho. "We, who are here assembled, promise never to speak of it."

A cloud spread over Ellen's beaming face, and she answered in a tone of earnest decision, —

"Four years ago I made myself a solemn promise never to do anything of the kind, and I neither can nor will break this resolution."

She felt that Uno's eyes were fastened upon her, and a deep blush covered her cheeks as she remembered the words which he had dropped, and which had induced her to take this resolution.

"Make a single exception to that promise," cried those around her.

"One is not allowed to make an exception to a promise; and when I assure you that I have not even done it for my husband, I hope you will see that I cannot do it now."

The question dropped; but neither Uno nor Ellen took so lively a part in the conversation as before. Soon after Uno approached Ellen, saying, —

"You have a good memory." He seated himself beside her.

"Why do you say so?"

"Because I believe that a little revenge lies in the promise you spoke of."

A revenge? On whom should I wish to be revenged?"

"On me."

"On you, Uno! You do not think as you say. How could I be revenged by sparing you an unpleasantness?"

"There it is! After four years you are still angry over the words which I dropped the first and only time I heard you improvise. You cannot forgive it that I refused you my admiration."

"What a singular misunderstanding!"

"Then give me an explanation."

"Not now." Ellen left Uno and mingled in the general conversation. The Count remained and looked after her, but with a peculiar blending of irony and melancholy in the expression of his face.

The next day we find Ellen at Count Rubens's, where only a few relatives had assembled. Ochard talked politics with the older gentlemen, and descanted on yesterday's debate in the "Riddarhus." The Justice was considered an unusually able man, because he talked well and wrote with facility. No one examined closer to find how much was his own and how much borrowed in his speech or writings. People found them popular and evincing judgment, — an opinion to which Evert himself, in various little crooked ways, had succeeded in bringing the public.

Baroness Ernstein sang a duet with Herr D——m. Ellen sat in a little corner sofa and listened. When the song was ended, Uno approached her and said, —

"You have owed me an explanation since yesterday, and I have now come to obtain it."

"What use is it to take up these old subjects," answered Ellen, with a slight blush. "You have always had difficulty in understanding dispositions such as mine."

"But you are too just to leave me without any explanation."

"Well then, I will comply with your wish." Uno's glance governed her, as it were, through the earnestness which rested in it. "You thought I was wounded because you refused me your homage for my little ability to improvise. But you were mistaken. I neither sought nor coveted your homage; but you wounded me deeply by the expression you dropped concerning me, when you denied me heart and feeling, and declared that I was a light-minded creature, who strove exclusively for the applause of others. You wished to regard me as a vain fool, and thus did me injustice. So I thought then; but now —"

She ceased. Her face wore an expression of melancholy.

"Continue, I beg," said Uno.

She looked at him with her open, honest gaze.

"Now I would almost be ready to thank you for the stern judgment."

"O Ellen, you are now bitter!"

"Not at all. Your assertion that I was vain, that I burned with the desire of being praised and flattered, led me to think, and the result was that I examined myself and found that I was not so insensible to this praise as I had believed. I then resolved, as a penance, never to appear before others as an improvisatrice, or in this capacity give nourishment to my desire of applause. I should blush before myself if compelled to acknowledge that I was a slave to my vanity."

"You have never improvised since?"

"Never when any one heard it."

"But you have published your poetical attempts. Is there not as much vanity in giving people an opportunity to admire your genius in print, as if you declaimed these poetical inspirations?"

Ellen bent down her head.

"There is more ambition in the latter course and more vanity in the former."

"Ambition? What is that but vanity? The desire for applause is contained in both these feelings."

Ellen made no reply; for they had now entered a domain where she was obliged to maintain silence; she could not as a wife say: "It is my husband who publishes my poems, as a compensation for my not improvising. His vanity needs my genius to shine with."

"Have you judged yourself aright? Or do you think you have actually overcome your vanity with this resolution not to appear as an improvisatrice?"

"Yes, I think so."

"And this love of display, the luxury with which you surround yourself, the life that you lead, what are the motives of all this?"

"Vanity," answered Ellen with a peculiar smile. "But why continue this conversation longer? If we overcome our desires in one respect, we find them again in some other."

At these words of Ellen's, Uno's face brightened and his eyes rested on her with an expression of warm sympathy. She resumed, —

"Explain this contradiction in your words, Uno. At the ball at Ernstein's you bade me become ambitious; to-day, when I said that I allowed my poems to be printed from pure ambition, you told me, vanity and ambition are one and the same."

"They have their ground in the same feeling. The latter is only a higher and nobler thirst for applause. The ambitious person would have a name to which one attaches the idea of something uncommon, noble, or elevated; it is for the future he works, to gain the respect of others. The vain individual, on the other hand, wishes to be praised, flattered, courted, and worshipped for trifles. The applause of the moment is what he covets. To appear first, to be noticed, to outshine, that is what he desires; he sacrifices everything in order to be flattered, and to see a crowd of thoughtless fools collected around him, who pay homage to his splendor, wealth, and folly. This is what vanity would reap. Well then, Ellen, it can become a woman of genius to be ambitious, to be vain degrades her."

"You are mistaken; vanity belongs to woman, ambition to man. He belongs to the world, she to social life."

A moment's silence ensued. At last Uno resumed, —

"You have thus no grudge remaining against me for the attack which I once made against geniuses in general and you in particular?"

"Grudge! Have you actually believed me to entertain anything of the kind?"

"Once I did *not* believe it," he faltered.

She did not ask when; she divined it, and the lively color on her cheeks gave

Uno reason to suppose that it was so; but however this might be, she resumed with a calm voice, —

"The childish resentment which I at first experienced has long since passed away, and I consider myself to stand in debt to you for the self-investigation which has resulted from your words."

"And will you hereafter regard me as a friend who possesses the right to speak frankly to you?"

"I will."

"Give me your hand in proof that we are friends."

Ellen laid her hand in his.

"Thanks, you shall never have reason to repent that you gave me your friendship."

When Uno, in the sincerity of his heart, uttered this promise, Asmodeus surely laughed behind his back and stretched out his imprecating hands over them both.

Just at the moment, when she gave him her hand, Evert came towards them.

"What is my Ellen treating of with our friend the Count?" asked he in the heartiest tone in the world, quite unlike the one with which he addressed her when no one heard it.

"Uno and I have promised each other friendship," answered Ellen, and offered Evert her hand.

"That is exceedingly fitting, as I am also happy enough to count myself among his friends, and it was always painful to me to see you as hostile towards each other as you were formerly. Apropos, my dear Kerner, I have something to ask of you." Ellen rose and Evert took her place.

After that evening Uno was a daily guest at Ochard's. The indefatigable Evert, whose aim it was to distinguish himself in all conceivable ways, had now established two reception-days a week; one, for artists, *literati*, and musicians, the other for the more aristocratic portion of their acquaintances, and at which everything was done to amuse and entertain these guests, who through the lustre of their name and wealth lent a reflection of it to his worth.

During the first days of March, Evert Ochard was nominated Assessor. The appointment was celebrated with a grand dinner at "Blå porten," and a few days afterwards the new Assessor gave a large ball.

They had already begun to dance, and yet Uno had not arrived. He had not been seen for a whole week.

Surprised at his absence, Ellen directed her eyes to the door oftener than usual. Her former teacher, Magister, now Rector Dahl, was also invited. He had come to the capital fourteen days before to make it his residence and to investigate the school system. Upon his arrival in Stockholm, he had hastened to visit the Rubens, Kerners, and Ochards. He happened to call at the latter place on one of the literary evenings. Uno was also there. Dahl was received by Ellen with the undisguised joy which she felt at seeing him again. Since then Uno had not met him either at Ochard's or elsewhere.

They had begun the second waltz, which Ellen, to the great indignation of her husband, danced with Rector Dahl. Just as she waltzed past the door of the dancing-hall, she fancied that she caught a glimpse of a dark face surrounded by black hair and whiskers, with a pair of flashing eyes. But she was not quite certain whether the sight was real or imagined; for when she danced by the second time, she did not see him. At length the waltz was over, and Dahl led Ellen into the saloon. Then there was some one who saluted her from a distance with a cold look and stiff bow. It was — Uno.

His greeting and whole behavior astonished her exceedingly, especially as their intercourse had of late been distinguished by a friendly and simple confidence, free from all constraint. She

treated him like a brother. This had been so much the easier for her as his whole relation towards her lacked the gallantry which is so usual with men. There was such calmness in all his movements, that Ellen felt tranquil in his presence, and without the least uneasiness abandoned herself to the pleasure of his society.

Now there was something strange and disturbed behind his stiff and measured greeting which awakened a certain shyness in her.

For the whole evening he neither approached her nor took part in the dance, but continued a passive beholder.

During the supper he conversed with Count Oscar Kerner. Ellen stood at a little distance and heard Oscar say, —

"Do people generally then think that Ochard wrote that attack against Gran, which caused him to be superseded?"

"Yes, they are fully convinced of it. It would be very bad for Ochard if he should have been guilty of so mean an action; for it is a great injustice committed against Gran, and Ochard's nomination has already aroused sufficient indignation, from the fact that Gran, who is a highly deserving man, has been supplanted."

"I, for my part, do not believe that Ochard could allow himself to be tempted to take so mean a step. To try to raise himself by putting down an associate, — I consider him to have too much honor for that."

"Bah! he is a vain fool, and such a one has no regard for honor or friendship. He cares only to distinguish himself, at whatever price. For the attainment of this object he will sacrifice anything."

Ellen withdrew, without the speaker's observing that she had heard them. But there was a painful feeling in her heart. A few moments later she found herself face to face with Uno. This time he could not avoid speaking to her.

"You are well, I hope?"

"Perfectly well, Count," answered Ellen.

"One always feels well when one is happy."

"And we are always happy when things go well with those we love. Is not my husband's promotion a natural cause for my feeling glad!"

"Indeed! I did not think that you took so deep an interest in his brilliant success, — a success which has caused another family deep pain. I thought, besides, that your happiness proceeded from a person who with more right could attribute to himself the merit of spreading joy."

"Then you were wrong," replied Ellen, almost haughtily. "My husband's prosperity and success are mine, and I have too high an opinion of him to believe that he has secured them through anything but his deserts."

"But to see old friends again, does that contain nothing for your *heart?*" The word "heart" was pronounced with strong emphasis. Ellen felt irritated; something of the former bitterness awoke within her, just as when he used to make his cutting remarks.

"I always feel glad to see my *real* friends again."

"And that pleasure you have now enjoyed in full draughts. Therefore I congratulate you."

"Of whom do you speak? I do not like these attacks, without aim or purpose. They are like pin points, which irritate without having the power to wound."

"The object stands directly before us."

"Dahl!" exclaimed Ellen, who raised her eyes and saw her former teacher's handsome and intelligent face. "Yes, you are right, it was a real joy to see him again. He has always been a true friend to me and an untiring teacher." Ellen said this with undisguised heartiness.

"A joy for which you, to speak according to the truth, would willingly have

sacrificed your husband's appointment and all the happiness he seems to enjoy from it."

She looked at him with a proud and noble expression. Then she turned and left him.

The next day at noon Count Uno Kerner was announced. He bade Ingrid say that he had something important to communicate to her mistress.

Cold and with her head carried high, Ellen went to meet him. He stood by the mantel-piece and supported himself against it.

"Count Kerner has desired to speak to me," said Ellen, as she took a chair and with her hand invited him to be seated; but he made a slight bow and remained standing.

"I could not resist the emotion of my heart which drew me here to apologize for an offence. I would rather expose myself to your anger, than know that I had a fault to deprecate and did not do it. Ellen, forgive the inconsiderate words which passed my lips last evening."

"I have been too deeply wounded to forgive and forget so easily."

"Could you not forgive words uttered under the influence of wild and confused feelings? Should you not be able to forget an injustice committed by a friend?"

"Perhaps an injustice, but not an affront. Had you entertained friendship for me, it would have been impossible for you to lower me in your esteem, to give room to so degrading a suspicion as that I could be a faithless wife. What has entitled you to believe such a thing of me? In the same moment that you thought of me in this way, you withdrew the respect which I know I deserve, and this I cannot forget."

"Ellen, forbear, I beg of you! Do not force me to abase myself before you by declaring the feelings that govern me. O, believe that I am severely enough punished by the contempt which I feel for myself! Be magnanimous. Be convinced that I shall remember your clemency with deep gratitude and respect." He stood there so penitent and looked at her with an expression full of pain. She could not refrain from giving him her hand, as she said with a grieved smile, —

"I will try to forget what has happened, the remembrance of it makes me too unhappy." She bent down and some tears fell on his hand. At the sight of this grief Uno's features contorted, and if Ellen had then seen his face she would have found the solution of the enigma of his behavior. Uno pressed her hand in silence and a pause ensued. Finally she raised her head and resumed: "It is always the privilege of our friends to be able to wound us deeply. But let us no longer speak of it; friendship makes us indulgent." She uttered the last word with hearty goodness.

"You promise me to continue to believe in my affection?"

"I have told you that all is forgotten. I never promise anything by halves."

"Thanks!" He kissed her hand. She was almost as pale as death when she again raised her head.

A period elapsed during which Uno had regained his calm and earnestly cordial manner.

Ellen's health had been delicate for some weeks. One morning Evert informed her that she had obtained the second prize of the Swedish Academy for the poems she presented; and he intended on account of it to make arrangements for a large ball on Ellen's birthday, the last he thought of giving during the winter. She made some objections to celebrating her distinction in so ostentatious a manner; but this only called forth some snappish words, whereupon he left her. During the weeks

which elapsed between this conversation and the great festivity, she was so weak and indisposed that she was obliged to keep her bed. The invitations were issued, and Evert thought with horror of being obliged to postpone all this glory, something which he would not submit to for any price in the world. He had intended to make this affair the most brilliant of the season, and lulled himself with sweet dreams of the attention he would attract with it, and now came Ellen's illness, threatening to put an end to the whole thing. But the physician said that it was only a slight cold which had settled on her lungs. Well then, with a little exertion on her part she ought to be able to subdue her indisposition. He went to his wife two days before the ball to make this clear to her.

"How do you feel, Ellen?" asked he, as he arranged his hair before the glass.

"I really think that I feel better today."

"That rejoices me inexpressibly, my dear. Would you not like to try to dress yourself and lie on the sofa?"

"I fear that I am too weak."

"If you continue to lie in bed, you will lose all your strength."

"I will do as you wish, dear Evert, but it might be best for you to recall the invitations for Friday."

"My own Ellen, I should be in despair if I were compelled to do that. If you will put a little constraint on your imagination, you will then see that you can overcome your indisposition easily enough. Try for my sake!" He kissed her hand.

Ellen allowed them to dress her, but was so weak that she was immediately obliged to lie down on a sofa. She represented to him that she should in all probability be unable to play the part of hostess, but he would not hear of this contingency. The day of the ball arrived; Ellen had sat up the day before, but felt so enfeebled, that she declared on the great day that she did not think she could receive all these guests and be awake half the night.

"You imagine that you are so weak only because you constantly think of it," said Evert, and compelled her to stand up and take a turn around the room. "You see, Ellen, you walk quite steadily. If you now rest this forenoon, drink a glass of wine at dinner, and dress yourself somewhat late, you will see that all goes well."

"The physician has expressly forbidden me to taste wine," replied Ellen, and held her hand to her aching head.

"Physicians are pedants. You will never regret your compliance, if you only obey me. It is true that you are pale, but that can be easily remedied. I have some remarkably fine rouge which I will give Ingrid."

"Shall I use rouge?" exclaimed Ellen, and looked at her husband. "Never!"

"Well, well, Ellen, do not begin your childishness again. There is no woman of the world who does not occasionally employ this innocent means for the sake of looking well; but I must always have a battle with you to get you to do what is wise and sensible. You never do what I desire, without my first having to go through a hard struggle. You seem to think more of having people say that you look suffering, that you are an unhappy wife. Probably it is your desire to represent me as a despot."

Ellen kept silence. At dinner-time Evert came in himself with a large glass of wine and a cup of beef tea. She took both with great effort. The wine increased the fever very considerably, and made the use of rouge entirely superfluous. Evert bustled in and out while she was dressing, and saw that she was attired according to his taste. When she was dressed and was to go into the saloon, she fancied that the floor swam, and that the walls would fall over her; but with the aid of smelling-salts she overcame

this dizziness, and, leaning on Evert's arm and summoning the whole strength of her will, she went to receive her company. The guests began to arrive. Ellen had a friendly smile for all, but every one wondered at the glassy look in her eyes and the unsteadiness of her motions.

"How are you, Ellen?" asked Uno in a whisper as he saluted her, almost frightened at her feverish look.

"Only a little indisposed," answered Ellen.

Most of the guests had come; they were only waiting for Excellency D——, who, at the Assessor's request, was to present the prize of the Academy to Ellen. At last he came. With the last effort of her strength Ellen rose to go to meet him. She had scarcely gone half-way across the floor, when it seemed to her that the whole room was a sea of fire, that the floor opened and she was plunged into a burning abyss; she put her hands to her head, uttered a cry of anguish, and fell senseless to the floor, but was instantly lifted up by a pair of strong arms and carried out of the saloon into a cabinet, where Emy followed her. It was Uno who had followed all her movements with apprehension, and hastened foward when he saw her reel. He could not reach her soon enough, however, to hinder her from falling.

When he had laid her on the sofa, he hastened out for a physician.

The company surrounded the despairing Evert, who in the outburst of his grief exclaimed, —

"I told her that it would be so; I wished to recall the invitations, but she was so stubborn. Ah! why does she never follow my advice!" Then he rushed into Ellen, while all pitied him and blamed her.

There is no one who knows so well how to turn all things to his advantage as a vain person. Sorrow itself becomes a means through which such an individual tries to appear in an interesting light and excite sympathy or admiration, according to the need of the moment.

Evert, with his desire to shine, had not been able to relinquish the triumph of seeing Excellency D—— present *his wife* the prize which the Swedish Academy had conferred upon her, before a large assemblage. To postpone this brilliant occasion and renounce the effect which it would produce, and this only on account of an indisposition, he did not possess the strength. But now, since the result had shown that Ellen was sicker than he believed, he hastened to draw all possible benefit from the sad occurrence for his all-absorbing vanity. It was consequently necessary to immediately represent himself as the one who had wished to restrain Ellen from receiving company when she was so ill. Although he felt a certain degree of compunction and real distress when Ellen fainted, his feelings were not so deep as to be able to silence the voice of his vanity, or the thought of how it looked to others. He immediately perceived the necessity of representing himself as the innocent party, as the sufferer, and Ellen as foolish and inconsiderate. The world must regard him as the ideal of a married man, who lived only for his wife and complied with all her whims. While he was anxious that the world should know that Ellen was a gifted and distinguished personage, who had chosen him from love, it was at the same time a need for his soul, thirsting for all manner of applause, that people should regard him as the tenderest of husbands. The aim of his life was to excite commendation and praise in the little as well as in the great.

When he drove through the streets of Stockholm with his elegant equipage, and people turned round to admire his horses, his heart swelled with joy. When

people, the day after a ball or a dinner party, gathered about him to pour out their praises over his good taste, his wealth and prosperity, he was as pleased as if he had distinguished himself by some great and noble deed; in a word, he wished in all things to attract attention, and to be courted and flattered. For the attainment of this object he squandered his fortune. To gain a promotion, he stooped to acts which neither honor nor conscience could approve. For an order he would have sacrificed anything, even his convictions, if a vain person can be said to have any convictions.

The day after the ball Ellen lay very ill. The cold, trifling in the beginning, had, through the exertion of leaving her bed, prematurely taken the character of a violent inflammation of the lungs. In the morning the street before their residence was covered with straw, a measure which Evert's vanity rather than his consideration for the sufferer had induced him to take; for the sick-room was in the back of the house, so that the sound of vehicles could not trouble the patient very much. In the evening people read in the papers "that the talented young poetess, Fru Ochard, who had been awarded the prize by the Swedish Academy, was dangerously ill."

Evert had in secret managed to have this announcement made. When one has a fortune, keeps a large house, and lives among the upper-tendom, he never lacks friends who are ready with drums and trumpets to proclaim his success or bewail his misfortunes, provided that these misfortunes do not bear the name of "financial ruin"; for then these friends of the day become mute and speedily withdraw.

In the vestibule sat Evert's servant, with a slip of paper on which he took down the names of all who sent to inquire after Ellen's health. Evert himself could not attend court, but he was the very incarnation of despair. We should swerve from the truth if we asserted that the sorrow he showed was entirely feigned; but he certainly manifested a greater degree of it than his heart contained. He spent the time contemplating his image in the glass, arranging his hair in a certain melancholy disorder, trying to give his face as despondent an expression as possible. May no one consider our young Assessor heartless on this account: he was really troubled, and would by no means have lost Ellen; but no sorrow, no joy, no feeling in his breast, was able to overrule his vanity.

While he wandered restlessly back and forth through the rooms, sighed, viewed himself in the glass, and was really quite as uneasy as he looked, two persons sat by Ellen's bedside and regarded her burning face, listening with the keenest anxiety to her moans. These two were Countess Emy and her daughter Ebba. From time to time Evert came in, went to the sick-bed, sighed, and looked at the Countess with a despairing expression. At noon the two physicians who had been summoned called for the third time. Evert pressed their hands, and stammered out a question full of anxiety. When they went away, Dr. M——, who was their family physician, said, —

"The Assessor never ought to have allowed her Grace to give that ball, as sick as she was. Now God alone knows what the end will be."

Late in the evening, when Ingrid went into her chamber, she stopped, frightened, and almost uttered a scream, for a man was sitting on the sofa; but when he at the same instant rose and took a step towards her, she recognized Count Uno.

"How is your mistress, Ingrid?" asked he, regarding Ingrid's tear-stained face with a gloomy look. He was so unnaturally pale and looked so haggard, that he seemed to Ingrid more like a ghost than a human being.

"She is very ill, Herr Count," an-

swered Ingrid, weeping. He seized her arm and asked eagerly, —

"What did the physicians say this evening?"

"They gave but little hope."

He put his hand over his brow and made some hasty turns around the room; then he threw himself down on Ingrid's sofa.

"Who is with her now?"

"Countess Rubens. The young lady has gone home, but the Countess will remain here to-night."

Uno nodded to Ingrid and left.

The days went by, under the greatest anxiety for Ellen's friends. Ingrid did not leave her couch; she was with her night and day, and when the Countess wished her to take some rest, her answer was, —

"If *she* dies, then I am willing to die with her."

Every evening Uno presented himself in Ingrid's chamber, always as pale and with every sign of deep sorrow.

A fortnight, how quickly it passes when we are in the midst of health and joy, how endless does it seem when we watch by the sick-bed of one we love, and fear every moment that the beloved being will leave us! Emy, Ebba, and Ingrid realized this during the time in which Ellen hovered between life and death. This was a painful period for Evert also, but he had so many ways of diverting his mind, between calculating the effect of his actions, thinking of what people would say, and exciting sympathy for himself, that the time to him was less long.

At the expiration of the fortnight, a slight change for the better had occurred. Ellen slept more calmly than usual that evening, and Ingrid availed herself of the opportunity to steal down to her room.

"How is she?" There was the usual question which met her every evening from the same trembling and anxious voice.

"Somewhat better."

"Better!" exclaimed Uno, starting up.

"Yes, she sleeps, and the fever has considerably diminished; besides, she breathes easier, and the doctors were more hopeful this evening than ever before."

One beautiful morning in the middle of April, Baroness Augusta called on Ellen, who now lay dressed on a sofa in the bedchamber. She had not yet obtained the doctor's permission to leave her room, for she was still extremly weak. When Augusta left her she met Evert in the saloon.

"Ah, are you at home yet? I thought that you were at the Diet, which is in session to-day," said Augusta.

"Not to-day, it meets to-morrow. I should have been absent in any case, because I desired to see you." He seized Augusta's hand. "Thanks for the sympathy you have shown me during Ellen's severe illness. Your friendship has been the deepest source of comfort. I think that I have found a trace of the former affection in it. Am I right?" Evert looked at her with a tender expression, and kissed her hand with warmth.

The Baroness drew away her hand, though neither hastily nor slowly, but with a completely indifferent motion. She seated herself in an easy-chair and said with the calmest voice in the world, —

"You are extremely mistaken, my dear sir. My sympathy has not in the least been devoted to you, but entirely to Ellen, whom I love with all my heart."

"You are cruel, Augusta. Do you mean to say by these words that I am to you an indifferent person? But why deceive us both with this language? Or do you not think that I can judge of your sentiments by those of my own heart? I know how to interpret the

feelings you entertain for Ellen better than you do yourself."

"Let me hear."

"Augusta," he sat down beside her and continued in a lowered but animated voice, "you know as well as I, that I have never ceased to love you, that I yet to this hour feel the same attachment to you as before we were compelled to separate. Do not turn from me with pride, for I have read your heart and found that the friendship which you show Ellen is only a veil thrown over the love which you still preserve for me. O, how I have thanked you for it in my heart! How I adore you!" Evert bent a knee to Augusta. "O, let me through a glance, a word, a single gesture, receive a confirmation of what I believe myself to have guessed!"

"Stand up, sir, and recollect that two rooms from here lies the wife whom you succeeded in decoying with your pretended love. Your words would have offended me if any other than you had uttered them. My answer to what you have believed or guessed is: you are a conceited fool. Do not show yourself so wounded by my words, but let us for once rightly understand each other and speak calmly of the matter. Look at me! Do I look as if I was tormented by an unhappy love? Am I sad, hypochondriac, pale? Not at all. I am cheerful, enjoy life, and feel very happy."

"Probably also in love with the husband whom you have chosen," observed Evert ironically.

"Your words are highly inappropriate, sir. I do not love my husband; but I am grateful to him; and however weak and frivolous I may be, I yet feel respect for myself and for the name he gave me. I shall consequently never lower myself so far as to play so miserable a part as that of opening a love intrigue with my friend's husband."

"Ah! madam, you are really cruel," said Evert.

"Cruel? Listen: you love me as little as I you; but you know that I belong to those who are in the mode, and you would have no objection to being considered the one whom I honored with my love. It would flatter your vanity to pass for the object which occupied the thoughts and feelings of the rich and courted Baroness Ernstein, so that it might be asserted aloud that my heart had yielded to your irresistible attractions. That would be a triumph of which you could boast."

"And from the fear of this you deny that you feel sympathy for me?"

"Not from fear, but from sincerity. When you brought out in the world a young, beautiful, and richly endowed wife, I sought her acquaintance, because I, who once loved you, and now, since the illusion had fled, saw through your character, desired to see what sort of a woman had bound her fate to yours. Has she a heart, then she will become unhappy by the side of a man whose vanity smothers all other feelings, thought I. Well, sir: who do you suppose can know Ellen without loving her? No one who has mind or feeling for the noble and the good."

The Baroness rose and extended her hand to him as she added: "I am sincerely your wife's friend, but nothing to you."

Quite confounded by the reprimand which he had received, Evert kissed the proffered hand; but when she was gone, he straightened himself to his full height and muttered, —

"You shall some time have to pay me for this humiliation."

Augusta had mortally wounded his vanity; she had dared to find his wife more worthy affection and sympathy than her husband; and, worst of all, she had let him understand that she knew his main weakness. The vain person cannot bear to have others perceive that he is led by this passion, but would like to

stamp on his actions and character the impression of something noble and elevated.

One afternoon, at the end of April, the Rubens, Kerners, Uno, and Baroness Ernstein presented themselves at Ochard's to congratulate Ellen upon her restored health. They were to have a little jubilee, when she left her room for the first time. This was an arrangement of Evert's, which was intended to be a joyful surprise to Ellen, and he had limited himself to inviting those who were especially attached to her. He had invited Uno from an entirely personal interest.

When all had arrived, Evert went in to Ellen, who was reclining in an easy-chair in a little cabinet adjoining the bedchamber. Ingrid sat on a footstool and read aloud to Ellen, who was in complete ignorance of the intended family party.

"Would you not like to go out in the saloon, Ellen dear? The air there is fresher, and as the sun comes in it is also more cheerful," said Evert, taking her little emaciated hand. There was something so unusual in his manner, and also in the circumstance of his being at home, as he had been away every afternoon since Ellen began to recover, that she felt touched by it.

"With pleasure, my dear." She rose, took his arm with a smile, saying: "I will go with you wherever you choose."

Evert pressed a kiss on her pale brow, and they went arm in arm out into the saloon, where they were received with the warmest congratulations. It was a scene to Evert's taste; for there was something full of effect in his entering the saloon with the pale Ellen on his arm. He had the pleasure of judging of the whole effect of it by a glance in the mirror. Neither could it be denied that he looked particularly well by the side of Ellen, and one could not avoid admitting, in spite of Ellen's paleness, that they were a handsome couple.

To celebrate his wife's recovery in love and quiet, alone by her side, was something for which Evert had no desire. Now, although he did not dare to invite a large number of guests from fear of Countess Rubens, he yet had the satisfaction of showing his love and his noble efforts to afford Ellen a pleasant surprise to a few persons at least.

When they had from all sides surrounded Ellen and congratulated her upon her recovery to health, Uno, who in the general enthusiasm had kept at a distance, came to her. Ellen gave him her hand with a smile.

"God be praised," said he with fervor, "that I am allowed to see you well once more!" His voice trembled slightly, and the look which rested on Ellen had such a warm and unspeakably tender expression that it quite moved her.

"We are here to afford you a pleasant evening; tell us, Ellen, what you would like," said Baroness Augusta.

"A little music," said Ellen.

"Shall I sing?" asked the Baroness.

Ellen's glance flew over to Uno, and as if he had understood the silent wish which was expressed in it, he said, —

"Perhaps Ellen would like to hear some of the Spanish people's songs?"

"O yes!" exclaimed she. The next moment Uno sang. Where was Ellen during the singing? Away, far away from the world and the people that surrounded her. She was brought back to the first wonderful dreams of her youth, to the strange longings which have neither form nor name. When the song ceased, Uno reaped general applause, as on former occasions. Ellen reached him both hands and said only, "Thanks!"

In the evening when they had all left, Ellen and her husband remained sitting awhile in the saloon.

"Do you know, Ellen, that Uno's brother-in-law has become Minister and

seems to stand very well in high places?" began Evert.

"The appointment has then been made during my illness."

"Precisely. I would therefore like to see you treat Uno with especial politeness. He has great influence over his brother-in-law, and this influence I desire to use to my advantage. He is besides nearly related to all persons now influential, and just the man from whom I can derive benefit. I hope that you have so much interest for your husband, that you will, for the promotion of his success, show those persons respect who can be of use to him."

"I have always done that, if these persons deserved my respect."

"Influential persons always deserve our respect, — mark that. Now I have remarked that Uno has taken a singular affection for you, especially since you received the prize for that last poem. In short, I with my sharp-sightedness have observed that you exercise influence over him, and this you ought to use to my advantage."

"But, my dear Evert, why are all these roundabout ways necessary? Your own merit is certainly the surest and best means of advancement. All other distinction than that which is based on your capacity is really not worth striving for."

"Listen, Ellen; will you be so good once for all as to do what I ask you without reasoning upon it? You have, it is true, a very remarkable ability to write verses; but, my dear, you are utterly lacking in judgment when it is a question of how one ought to act in real life. Show me therefore the politeness of believing my judgment infallible in such matters, and conform yourself to what I say without reflecting upon it. Now I desire that you may be particularly polite and attentive to Count Uno, and all further words on this subject are unnecessary."

Ellen made no reply, and Evert resumed after a short pause, —

"As you, according to the doctor's assertion, ought to lead a more quiet life as long as you are so weak, you have an opportunity every evening to receive those who call upon you, and I hope that you will not oppose this, as the visits will necessarily be short and cannot very well fatigue you. Or have you again some objection to make?"

"No, Evert, I have not; but why talk to me in this short, cold tone?"

"Is my tone short and cold? You are truly very impatient; if at any time I wish to talk over serious matters, then you say that my tone is cold. You have a very unhappy disposition which can never be anything but a torment to your husband, for I can never consult with you or express my wishes without being misunderstood and hearing sharp words." He rose and was going to leave the room.

"Evert," exclaimed Ellen, reaching him her hand, "do not be displeased with me and have indulgence with my fault. God is my witness that I am glad to comply with your wishes in everything which does not conflict with my convictions."

"I hope I am not one to overcome your convictions or make you deviate from what is right?"

"Evert, be a little kinder," said she.

"Why, my dear, I am kind enough," answered he in a voice between friendly and cross, "although I cannot bear endearments all the time. My dear, a man has larger and weightier interests in life than to sit and coo by his wife's side. Love is to him an agreeable pastime for leisure moments, when he has nothing else to think of; but never ought a wife to demand that he shall constantly fondle her."

How little Evert was suited to Ellen can be easily inferred from the above-

described conversation, which showed plainly how foreign the world of the home and the heart was to him. And yet it was all to her. She resembled one of those tropical plants which wither if removed to a cold climate. She needed love and tenderness, and when she missed these feelings in her husband, she fell into a melancholy state and sought in imagination a recompense for what reality had denied her.

Uno now went to Ochard's oftener than usual. His manner towards Ellen breathed so much friendship and unfeigned affection, that it inevitably made an impression on her, neglected as she was by her husband. Seldom or never had Evert a word of love for her when they were alone; but when others were present he was extremely amiable and attentive.

Uno's society became a need to her, without her seeing in this need or the feeling that bound her to him anything but friendship. It never entered her mind that any danger to her peace might lie concealed in this friendship. She enjoyed it as a flower destined for the warm sunshine, but, placed in the shade, enjoys the few stray beams which sometimes reach it.

One evening when Uno called he found Ellen entirely alone.

"Is Evert away?" asked he.

"Yes, he is at President S***'s," answered she.

"Tell me one thing frankly, Ellen, but with perfect sincerity," said Uno.

"If I can, then be assured that I shall answer frankly."

"One can always be open when speaking to a friend whose affection can be relied on, and you can certainly not do otherwise than trust in mine?"

"Well, let me hear what weighs on your mind," said Ellen smiling.

"I did not get any answer as to whether you believed in my friendship." Uno regarded her with an expression in his black eyes which was for some seconds so full of passion, that she would assuredly have answered the question with a no, if she had looked up and met his glance, but her eyes were fastened on her work.

"I considered it unnecessary to answer it, because you know more than well that I both believe and confide in your friendship."

Now she looked up; but he had turned his eyes from her to a picture, as if he feared that she should discover the feelings that were reflected in them.

"Thank you, Ellen. After this assurance it will be so much the easier to touch this subject. I must begin with a question: does Evert desire to obtain an order?"

Ellen blushed deeply and looked down at her work. She knew that this was one of the motives which had induced her husband to ask her to be polite to Uno. It seemed so repugnant to her to answer. She could not say no truthfully. As she remained silent, Uno bent down and regarded her a moment as if to force her to answer; but as she still made no reply, he resumed, —

"Do you find it humiliating to answer this question in the affirmative?"

Ellen looked up. There was a mild reproach in Uno's voice and a still milder in his look.

"Yes, almost," she replied.

"And wherefore? Am I a friend of so little value to you, that pride overrules affection in the most insignificant thing?"

"Certainly not, you know full well that it is not so."

"Do I? No, Ellen, no, I do not know it," said he impulsively and seized her hand, but dropped it immediately, adding, "why then not answer my question with a simple *yes* or *no*?"

"If you had asked me: Do you wish to win another prize for the poem you are now writing? I would have answered

yes, without embarrassment, for then it would have concerned me personally, and if I thereby placed myself in a wrong light, it would have been of little consequence; but when it concerns my husband — " She ceased and worked diligently. Uno's eyes rested on her with a dark and gloomy expression.

"You are afraid of placing him in a doubtful light? You thus love him very much."

There was something in his tone which made a painful impression on Ellen. With a gentle earnestness she answered, —

"And to whom ought a wife's heart to stand nearer than to her husband?"

"You are right, Ellen. Who should a married woman love, if not the mate whom she has chosen from free will? But let us return to the point at issue." He passed his hand over his brow as if to drive away the dark and bitter feelings which for a moment had been reflected on his face.

"Should you desire Evert to be honored with an order?"

"Yes, I should with all my heart."

"It would make you happy?"

"Yes, it would afford me a real joy."

"And wherefore? Is it the distinction which flatters your vanity?"

"Perhaps," answered Ellen, smiling. "But to speak frankly, I think it is also the consciousness of having a husband who, through his eminent qualities, deserves to wear a decoration of honor."

"You are thus ambitious in your husband's behalf?".

"Yes, and it is about the only ambition that is granted to us married women."

"But you have not confined yourself solely to this?"

"No, that is true; I have been so also on my own account." She leaned back against the sofa and fastened her eyes on a picture, as she added with a thoughtful look, "But for us childless women it can be excusable if we abandon ourselves to some folly. How would you have us pass the time?"

"In doing good."

"True! But still there is a good deal of superfluous time, which falls to the lot of the unoccupied. Then do not begrudge them the compensation which they might find in the pouring out of their fancy, or in the dreams it creates. If their poetical attempts are of no use, they do no harm; but they are the product of that surplus of feeling which must find vent in some way. It is not from vanity that they write, these poor enthusiasts without aim or object for their existence; no, it is from an indwelling need, which when it is allowed to clothe itself in words yields the soul a peculiar satisfaction. What does the poor poet care at the moment when ecstasy lifts him above a cold and desolate reality, whether the world praises or finds fault with these tones which sprang from the depths of his soul? Ambition does not exist at those times when the poet gives form to his fancy; it comes afterwards, when the cold reason and vanity sit down to calculate the advantages of it." Never before had she expressed herself so unreservedly before Uno, and without being aware of it herself, there was much shadowed forth in her words which Uno had hitherto only guessed.

"If you had been a mother, would you not then have appeared as an authoress?"

"No, never. Then I should have had no time left to dream away."

"Nor any time for pleasure either?"

"Pleasure? My greatest, my only real pleasure I would then have found in my home." Her eyes shone with a strange light, and an expression of sweet and unutterable feelings spread over her whole face.

"What an excellent mother would she not have been!" thought Uno, and could not turn his eyes away from her. "O

fate, fate! why did I not learn her worth before!" He sighed and resumed, "But you now in your imagination see a happiness which in reality you would not perhaps have treasured so highly. Do you think that you would have the courage to renounce these pleasures which seem to be such a need to you, for the sake of your children?"

"A need, do you say?" exclaimed she with animation and turned her face towards him. "Ah, how little you know me!"

"But if they are not a need, what can then force you to waste your time and health in this empty society life?"

The word "force" seemed to recall Ellen to herself, and to remind her that she ought to give heed to what she said. Her face, which a few moments before had had that peculiar dreamy and innocent expression which characterized her first youth, now resumed its usual reserved aspect.

"Nothing forces me; but I follow with the stream, from lack of interest for anything else."

Uno, who had not for an instant turned his gaze from Ellen's face, closely observed the changes in it. He saw immediately that he had brought the conversation upon a territory which she would never allow him to enter.

"You, Ellen, with your education, might have interested yourself in something else than spending your days in this aimless way."

"Let us leave this subject. It seems to me better to be a fool among fools than to aspire to be original. Besides, I have in my poetical attempts found an occupation which is fully in harmony with my natural inclination, however blamable you may find my rhyming," added she smiling.

"Now, I no longer think it blamable. Ah! the time is long since past when I wished only to discover faults in you."

Baroness Ernstein entered and interrupted the conversation.

"Where do you intend to spend the summer?" asked she of Ellen after they had talked awhile about indifferent things.

"Both the Rubens and the Kerners have invited us to spend the summer with them; but I have not yet decided. It will depend upon how much leisure Evert has; he is now very much occupied."

"Shall you not stay at your charming little Eksholm?" resumed the Baroness.

"It is not yet in order," answered Ellen. "Besides, the physicians may order me to spend some weeks at a watering place."

"I suppose you are now so well, dear Ellen," said Evert, "that we can take a drive to Djurgården on the 1st of May? I thought that we would then try my new carriage. It will certainly be one of the handsomest turnouts at Djurgården. As regards the summer, I have decided to visit *** baths this year; it seems to be a great place of resort and I desire that you may be seen there. Uno's brother-in-law and family are going to be there some weeks. I have already written and engaged suitable rooms for you; I do not think I shall spend all my time at the baths, for I cannot be so long away from the Diet. Are you satisfied with my arrangement?"

"Yes, Evert. To be sure I rather wished to spend the summer at Eksholm; but as you have already made your arrangements, I am satisfied."

"And in that you do wisely. Besides, I will tell you that Eksholm is not a place where I shall ever stay. It belongs to you, not me, as included in that highly unsatisfactory settlement which your mother made."

"That which is mine is certainly

yours also," answered Ellen, and offered him her hand with a gentle smile.

"That sounds very well, but has this against it, that it does not exactly fit with an arrangement which indicates the most humiliating distrust of me."

"My dear Evert, when my mother made this arrangement, I was a child, and you a person whom she did not know and consequently could not offend with it."

"That holds for your mother, but not for you. Had you really loved me and possessed confidence in me, you would have cancelled these conditions."

"My dear Evert, if the day ever comes when you need this sum which my mother left at my disposal, you can be fully convinced that I will let you have it. I have now used the interest of it to alleviate the need of some few; but what I have done is unhappily so little compared with what I desire to do."

"That is very well; but you carry out your charity, as you do everything else, in the wrong way. You visit these poor places, sit down there and make fine speeches, provide for a few families, and so forth; but what advantage do you derive from it?"

"That of having relieved trouble and mitigated wretchedness."

"Very romantic! but if you were not governed by such an overweening self-love, you would have consulted with me, and then we should both have had satisfaction from it. In all the relations of life you ought to rely solely on me."

"Hereafter I shall advise with you."

"Good! I desire you to give two or three hundred riks thalers to the Treasurer, to be distributed among the poor of the city on the birthday which is soon to occur in the royal family. This, my dear, is a noble way of doing good; for in the first place it shows your respect and regard for the royal family, and next you help the needy with it. There is some reason in such an act."

Ellen made no reply.

"You are silent. Of course this proposition is not acceptable to you. How could you, in your self-love, acknowledge that what I propose is right, and with your fanciful character how is it possible for you to do anything that is sensible or calculated to serve a purpose?"

Ellen looked tired and annoyed; but she forced her face to assume another expression as she said: —

"Evert, you do me injustice. I am always willing to gratify your desires and to act in accordance with them."

"I wish it were so, but hitherto I have not perceived any of that willingness."

"You have my full permission to give the three hundred riks thalers to the Treasurer, but do not do it in my name, if you —" Ellen ceased and looked at her husband with a shy expression.

"Leave that matter to me, my dear. The Treasurer has personal friendship and respect for me and never fails to show it. I am invited to dine with him to-day. I am now obliged to leave you, but will be home at one o'clock, for I am at leisure to-day and can go with you to Djurgården. I wish people to see us together, so that every one can say of us that we still live happily after a five years' marriage."

Evert nodded to Ellen and left the room. When he had made his toilet, which was no slight affair for him, he returned to his wife, perfumed and dressed with a care which showed how anxious he was to preserve his reputation of a "handsome man."

"I forgot to tell you, Ellen, that I desire you to work more zealously on the second volume of your poems. I think, besides, that you ought never to receive morning calls anywhere but in your study; a literary woman ought to spend her forenoons there, else any one would think you were not such a person. One thing more; the subject of woman's education is now the fashion, and it seems

to me you ought to write something about it. Adieu! Do not forget to think of your toilet for the 1st of May." With this he left.

Ellen smiled bitterly.

The 1st of May came.

"What an elegant carriage, what remarkably fine horses, what a handsome couple!" These were the exclamations which were heard among the crowd when the Assessor of Ochard and his wife drove by in their splendid new barouche.

"What a charming hat Fru Ochard has on! Such a peculiar shape! You can be sure that it is the newest style when she wears it," said the ladies.

"He is noted for his exquisite taste, that Ochard! Just look at the harness and see how elegant it is!" said the lions of the capital.

"O, if I could be in Fru Ochard's place!" thought the young girls. "How magnificently she is dressed, how much notice she attracts, and what a handsome husband she has! She is certainly to be envied!"

Evert was happy as he sat and smiled so tenderly at Ellen, chatting gayly; for although apparently taken up with his wife, he did not fail to observe all the glances, full of admiration or envy, which everywhere followed them.

They stopped at the "plain," and Evert alighted to greet Countess Kerner as she sat in her carriage. With his foot on the step, he spoke with her a moment; then he said some flattering words to Baroness Ernstein about her toilet and hastened from her to the Rubens carriage, which he discovered a little farther off. By this means he obtained an opportunity of shining with his aristocratic acquaintances.

"Ellen looks pale. How is she?" asked Countess Rubens.

"She is perfectly well," was Evert's answer; but he was highly displeased with Ellen for not rouging a little, as he had wished, in order to get a fresher look.

When he returned to his wife, he found her carriage surrounded by a number of young men, who competed to render the wealthy and distinguished poetess their homage; for in their estimation the value of her poetical productions was considerably enhanced by the wealth and luxury she displayed: A poetess in an ordinary dress and on foot can never, according to the judgment of such persons, possess the genuis of one who rides in a costly carriage behind magnificent horses, and is dressed in silk and velvet.

When Evert again sat beside his wife, he said in a displeased tone, although his face wore a smiling expression, —

"It is too bad, Ellen, that you are so stubborn; if you had followed my advice and colored your cheeks quite slightly, I should have escaped the unpleasant effects of your looking pale and suffering. But you are bound to follow your fantastic caprices in everything!"

A few days after this, people read the following in all the papers; —

"The Assessor of Ochard and his wife have given three hundred riks thalers to the Treasurer, to be distributed among the most needy in the capital on his Royal Highness, the Crown Prince's birthday."

On the evening of the day on which this appeared in the newspapers, Evert came in to his wife with Count Uno Kerner.

"Try to chat away an hour with Uno," said he, "until I am through with Count K——, who has something important to say to me. I would then like to speak a few words with you, Uno."

"You were not at Djurgården on the 1st of May?" said Ellen, who observed

with surprise that Uno looked unusually cold and reserved.

"No, I had no desire to see all that folly and then think of all the misery that exists," answered Uno.

But the weather was glorious, it was a really beautiful spring day."

"True! I enjoyed it too in my way. I spent the 1st of May at Löda."

"At Löda? fourteen miles from here!"

"Yes, the farther away the better. I went there the last of April and came back yesterday.

"Then you had an especial reason for this journey?"

"Yes, but it was entirely personal. It was a caprice, if you will. But the return here effaced all the glorious impressions of my little trip in the country?"

"Has anything unpleasant occurred?" said she kindly.

"Yes. The angel whom I there adored changed at my arrival here to an ordinary woman. O, illusions! how mournful you are!"

Ellen's eyes sank before the expression in Uno's, and a deep flush burned on her cheeks. She was silent.

"That was a fine donation to the poor, which Evert and his wife gave to the Treasurer," added he directly with a perceptible bitterness in his voice. "When I read of it, I remembered a little dispute which you and I had about the beautiful quality of being unpretending. You have probably forgotten the controversy?"

Ellen was not able to answer. Every word lacerated her heart and tore open the wounds which bled there in silence.

"I remember right well your asserting that you possessed the rare quality of not wishing to shine with the good which you did."

"And you did not believe that I spoke the truth," replied Ellen in a low voice.

"Well, then, was I right or wrong when I doubted?"

Ellen bowed her head.

"Was I wrong when I believed that you, like most women, was disposed to play the part which would take best out on the world's stage?"

Ellen did not answer.

"You are silent, you think that I meddle in an unbecoming manner in affairs that do not concern me. You feel wounded, and consider me wrong."

"No, Uno, no," she whispered, "you are right, I am not unpretending, I am a vain fool who wishes to shine and win applause." She looked up; two tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

Uno had never seen Ellen weep before. There was something so humble, so mild and ravishing in the expression of her face, that he could have thrown himself on his knees and retracted his words; but there was a certain something in her whole demeanor which in the first place inspired respect and which restrained every outburst of passionate feeling. He therefore remained motionless in his place, but with his gaze fastened on this face which was surrounded by a halo of purity. He could not refrain from seizing her hand while he said with warmth, —

"Forgive me! I have wounded you. I have forced tears from your eyes with my words, and have now as formerly done you injustice. Only tell me that it is not you who have given publicity to your work of charity, and I will believe you. Yes, I will believe you, so much rather as I ought to have guessed that this was one of Evert's freaks."

"Uno," exclaimed Ellen with animation, "you now for the first time commit a mistake. Evert has no part in it. The whole folly of this act belongs to me, me alone."

"Ah, Ellen, why force me to consider you a slave to a pitiful vanity?" Uno's look was sorrowful.

"Because one friend ought not to cherish incorrect ideas about the other," answered she.

A pause ensued. Uno rose and went to the piano. He preluded a long time. Ellen leaned her cheek against her hand and looked out into the street. Suddenly he began to sing the same ballad that he had heard Ellen sing at Löda. There were wonderful things passing in the young woman's breast as she sat and listened to this voice. The emptiness of her home, the aimlessness of her life, so rich in outer splendor, so poor in actual happiness, all, all appeared before her inner view, and the longing for domestic bliss and mutual love which had so often filled her heart during her marriage was now felt more acutely. She could have wept, wept over herself and all the beautiful dreams which had fled. Memories, tempting and yet strangely bitter, came up in her soul as she recalled the evening when she, abandoned to herself and in solitude, had sung that song, and again she seemed to feel the same trembling which she experienced when Uno bade her sing it once more. How much had she not then hoped from life and from the man to whom she was betrothed, and how had not this man's irremediable vanity humiliated and wounded her, and by this means laid waste the Eden of which she had dreamed!

Ellen remained motionless even after the song ceased. From the confused whirl of thoughts and feelings in her soul, she was roused by these words, which Uno uttered quite near her, —

"Let me once more hear you sing."

"It is impossible this evening," stammered she, without turning her head. Uno continued, after a moment's silence, —

"Do you remember our little feuds at Löda?"

She bowed her head affirmatively, and he continued, —

"Do you remember what a sharp rebuke you gave me on Ebba's account, in the supposition that I loved Sappho?"

"You said that I was mistaken, and I believed you."

"Yes, God knows you were mistaken; it is so easy to be in error! We generally judge by appearances."

"Alas, yes! But that time appearances were against you."

"I will tell you all the circumstances of the case. It was said that Sappho had had a previous attachment, and only married Oscar out of pique. She and I happened to speak of family relations, and then I said, that, on no conditions in the world, would I, like Oscar, marry a young, beautiful, and wealthy woman, who only gave me her hand because she could not have the one she loved. Sappho was at first very much excited and then burst into tears. At the sight of the grief I had occasioned, and realizing the lack of delicacy in my words, I begged her forgiveness, while I was fully as agitated as she. It was at this moment that you saw me at her feet, and came to your conclusion about my feelings. It has often pained me to think that you could believe me capable of so despicable an act as to speak to a married woman of love."

"Since then I have made up my mind never to judge by appearances," replied Ellen, who had listened with interest to Uno's words. "But if I committed a mistake in regard to Sappho, I did not in regard to Ebba. It has surprised me when I have thought of the matter, that you, who are so stern and strict in all that pertains to morals, could for a moment try to make an impression on Ebba when you were not attached to her."

"You are right, Ellen; but the reason of it was that I wished to love her. Ah! even to this moment I desire that I could have become attached to this charming child."

"If you wished it, why could you not? She, who is so fully created to shed happiness around her, ought not to be hard to love."

"I could not love her, for I already loved another."

Why did Ellen blush? She did not know herself. Uno continued, —

"And this other I did not wish to love. One is sometimes made up of sheer contradictions, and so was it also with me. We are governed more by our feelings than by our will."

"Not always!" said Ellen, with an open glance. "With our will we control our feelings, so that they do not exceed the domain of right."

"That was the use which I made of my will. I should despise myself if I allowed passion to make me forgetful of what honor and conscience demand."

Evert's entrance broke off the conversation. The latter began to talk to Uno about the services which he considered himself to have rendered the government during the Diet, and spoke so boastingly of it, that Ellen blushed with distress. She feared that her husband, in his zeal to obtain an order, would expose his main weakness too much. What she dreaded actually occurred when Evert said, —

"You find from this, that in all justice they cannot avoid giving me a proof of their satisfaction, provided that some of my friends at court present the matter in the proper light. In this respect I count upon your and your brother-in-law's friendship for me. You stand well at court, and every one knows what an influence your brother-in-law possesses."

"Rest assured that neither he nor I will neglect to employ it to your advantage," replied Uno, as Ellen fancied, somewhat coldly although politely. She felt that Uno's eyes rested on her.

"To me personally it is all the same whether I have a star or not," resumed Evert; "but it would afford me pleasure because Ellen desires it, and also for the reason that it is rather a shame to lack this decoration than an honor to wear it. Besides, if one has a wife with never so little vanity, it becomes something which he almost regards as a necessity."

"Would it afford Ellen so great a pleasure to see Evert decorated with the North Star," * asked Uno with a searching glance.

Evert reddened and looked uneasily at his wife; but his anxiety was unnecessary. Ellen answered smiling, but without looking up, —

"Certainly it would."

When Uno left Ochard's house that evening, he thought: "And that vain simpleton can have such a gem of a wife! How afraid she is that the least shadow shall fall on him! But how is it possible that such a richly endowed nature can love this fool, who lives only for his vanity! Does she love him?" he asked himself, and stopped abruptly.

It was at the end of June. The fashionable watering-place, ***, was filled with persons belonging to rich and noble families. Luxury and magnificence were here displayed according to each one's greater or less desire to shine. People came to bathe and regain their health, to amuse themselves and make a show, to compete with and eclipse others. They drove the chariot of folly and pleasure at full speed, under the pretext of recuperating their strength by inhaling the fresh sea-air.

Assessor Ochard and wife appeared there with all pomp and state. Ellen displayed a magnificence of attire, which, according to custom, excited open admiration and secret envy. There, as everywhere, she threw all others into the shade with her taste and elegance. She was, besides, an acknowledged woman of genius, a favorite poetess who had received the prize, and it was consequently natural that she should become the object of flattery and homage from all quarters.

* A Swedish decoration of the highest order.

The day after their arrival at ***, Evert came in to his wife, accompanied by Uno. Ellen looked almost frightened when she saw him.

"My coming surprises you," said he.

"Yes, it does, indeed. You contemplated spending the summer abroad," answered she.

"Yes, that was my intention. But I have become tired of long journeys. I have travelled all over Europe and therefore —"

"He allowed me to persuade him to come here," fell in Evert. "As I cannot stay here more than a week, you and Baroness Ernstein would be left entirely without masculine protection, when I returned to Stockholm; therefore I proposed to Uno to take the responsibility of watching over you and becoming your chevalier during my absence."

"That was a trust conferring so much honor, that I would by no means have resigned it to any other," said Uno.

The first ball was given the same evening. Evert stood in the midst of some friends and acquaintances and looked at the dance. Ellen was dancing with Uno.

"Are you going away in a week?" inquired one of the circle.

"Yes, I am compelled to, on account of matters of importance in the Diet," answered he.

"And leave your charming wife here all alone?"

"She is acquainted with almost everybody at the bath. She is going to share her apartments with Baroness Ernstein. Besides, Count Uno Kerner, as a distant relative of my wife's, is to be her protector during my absence."

"Is your wife related to the Kerners?"

"Yes, her mother was a relative of Countess Kerner's," replied Evert with studied carelessness.

"You have been very fortunate, Ochard, in obtaining such a wealthy, amiable, and gifted woman for your wife."

"I can truly admit that fortune favored me that time," said Evert smiling; "for I assure you that I had no idea of courting her in the beginning, and I should probably never have thought of doing so, for I was then in love with another lady, had she not shown me an attention which informed me that I had made a conquest unawares. When a man sees himself loved by a young, beautiful, captivating woman, he easily accommodates himself to his fate and accepts the yoke she would impose."

"You have really an astonishing luck with women."

"Yes, I do not know from what it comes; my wife, for example, actually adores me."

"And you?"

"We men cannot love so passionately as women. Our time, besides, is taken up by weightier matters; but I am inexpressibly fond of her, and make it a point of honor to comply with her wishes in all things and her caprices also."

At the very beginning of the conversation, Uno, after finishing the dance, had conducted Ellen to a sofa close behind Evert, without the latter's observing it. Both Uno and Ellen heard all that was said.

She who was so careful of her husband's reputation, and did everything to place him in such a light that his faults should not appear, now heard this husband boast in a heartless manner that he had not been the one who first loved her, but that it was she who, through her violent fancy, had occasioned him to bind himself to her. And besides this boast that she adored him, and that he from a sense of honor gratified her caprices, all, all was calculated to wound her sensitive soul.

With a dark brow and threatening look Uno sat at Ellen's side. When the speakers had left, he said in a tone full of bitterness, —

"It was thus you who, through your

violent love, compelled your husband to pay his addresses to you? He does not make any great secret of the happiness which your love conferred upon him."

It needed only this to increase Ellen's pain. She knew that she was observed on all sides, and that any exhibition of feeling would be noticed; she therefore repressed by a violent effort the grief which would have forced tears from her eyes. She looked at Uno and said in an almost beseeching voice, —

"Uno, not a word further upon this, if the friendship you have for me is real."

"How can you appeal to my friendship at this moment? Do you know —"

"I know that Uno Kerner is too much of a nobleman to wish to wound the woman who —"

"Is not happy! You are right." He rose and left her.

A few moments afterwards Ellen saw him chatting merrily with Baroness Augusta.

At this sight she felt so miserable, so alone, so deserted by all, that she could have melted into tears. Uno's tone and manner had pained her, she fancied that there was in this tone something scornful and contemptuous. Ah! if he had spoken kindly, had stayed with her and sought by his presence to dispel the grief which her husband's words occasioned her, she would then have felt less miserable. His coldness and indifference wounded her deeply. While she was under the sway of these painful feelings, we will listen to the Baroness and Uno's conversation.

"I suppose you saw Ellen at the time when her fancy for Ochard arose?"

"Yes, certainly! He had incredible difficulty in interesting the proud young girl, who regarded all young men with great indifference. I have never seen a girl who cared so little for attention. I think that he pressed his suit in vain for two whole years."

"And yet I have heard precisely the contrary, namely, that she had first taken a fancy to him."

"Ha ha, ha!" laughed the Baroness. "I would bet anything that Ochard himself has spread that; but any one who has seen them can testify to the contrary. I suppose he will assert in a few years that Ellen proposed to him, in order to prove palpably how irresistible he has been."

"But one cannot readily suppose that an honorable man would wish to boast at his wife's expense."

"But a vain man will do that and much more, to gratify his ruling passion. You see, Count, you do not wish to acknowledge what pitiful fools men are, when they are tempted by the demon of vanity. As far as Ochard personally is concerned, he is the greatest of all such fools."

"You will not dispute that Fru Ochard loved him?"

"No, not by any means; but that she was not the one who first fell into the flame, I can assure you; and what is more, I do not think that Ellen is one of the passionate kind. She loves her husband with a mild and quiet affection, which makes her capable of any sacrifice; but she does not and has never entertained any strong and vehement passion for him. As little would she be able to feel it for another."

"Your words would lead one to infer that she is a little bit insensible."

"Such at least is my idea of Ellen's character."

"There would then be a contradiction between her power of imagination and her heart, for the former is glowing as the southern sun, at least to judge by her poetic productions."

"And why not? One capacity of the soul is often developed at the expense of another. Ellen would have been too richly endowed if her sensibility had received the same degree of strength as her genius. Besides, it may be that her

sensibility stopped at this normal standpoint, just from the reason that she happened to become attached to this man, who is now her husband, and who, notwithstanding his handsome face and elegant attire, appears somewhat superficial on a nearer acquaintance."

Uno had become thoughtful. The music called the Baroness to the dance; but Uno remained still and followed all Ellen's motions with the greatest interest, as if he had wished to read her heart.

That night, when Ellen returned home, she had taken the resolution not to refer to the conversation that she had heard. She now knew this vain man perfectly. To rebuke him for the fault which he had committed would only wound his self-love and completely break the harmony between them. She no longer thought of domestic happiness. Nothing of that kind could come in question with a man who placed his desire to shine in the world before all else.

"I have promised before God to share prosperity and adversity with him, to live for his happiness, to forget myself for his sake; well then, I will keep my vow, regardless of how he keeps his; and even if my heart bleeds, I will still be faithful to my duty," thought Ellen, as she went to join her husband.

Evert said with a triumphant smile, —

"I owe you a compliment for your toilet, it was exquisite; and as Count F——, Baron U——, Captain E——, and some others said to me, there were none who could gainsay that you were the best dressed of any at the ball. The only thing I had to find fault with was, that your hair was not so arranged as to show its abundance. A lady of the world, dear Ellen, never neglects to display the treasures of beauty and charms which nature has given her."

Two days subsequent Evert gave a breakfast to his numerous friends, as he was to depart the following day. Uno, of course, was among them, besides Baroness Ernstein's brother-in-law, the young Baron Alfred Ernstein. When the gentlemen had drank wine, and it had gone to their heads a little, they began to talk about women. Evert related how lucky he had been and still was with the fair sex. He regretted that he could not even as a married man escape the troublesome fortune of exciting love.

"It is generally asserted," said a young Lieutenant of the Guard, "that you have been deeply in love with Baroness Ernstein, and even betrothed to her. If that is so, why did you not marry her?"

"Well, what would you have a man do? I was not sufficiently enamored to content myself with love in a cottage," answered Evert, shrugging his shoulders; "but I willingly confess that I thought a good deal of Augusta, and it is only my sense of honor which makes me as a married man remain cold to the regard which she still cherishes for me."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Lieutenant, laughing. "The Baroness is a friend of the wife and in love with the husband! But, my dear fellow, you may try to cheat whom you will, still you will not get me to believe that your heart is cold to the beautiful Baroness. One cannot very well love his wife to all eternity, even if that wife is as charming a woman in all respects as yours."

"You forget that when one is loved passionately, and knows himself to be the object of a captivating wife's exclusive devotion, he cannot but remain faithful to her. I, at least, am too honorable a man to act otherwise."

"In the mean time the Baroness is your wife's intimate friend, and your sense of honor is in continual strife with the impression which the beautiful woman must make on you."

"Say rather the pain which it must

occasion to see one's self loved, and neither possess the inclination nor the right to respond to the tenderness which one inspires against his will." Evert's eyes flew over to the young Baron, who, pale and silent, had listened to the whole conversation.

Uno went forward and laid his hand on Evert's shoulder, while he said, —

"And it is very painful to see a woman with an unblemished reputation become the victim of a thoughtless jest." Uno turned to the others: "Gentlemen, there are women enough without honor to jest over; therefore leave those who have it in peace."

A general silence succeeded these words. Evert colored with resentment, and a fecling of spite against Uno arose in his heart; but his vanity needed the Count, therefore he swallowed the rebuke.

Ellen and Baroness Augusta were to take a short ride on horseback in the afternoon. They had decided to go alone, attended only by a servant.

The gentlemen had not yet separated after their late breakfast when Baron Alfred discovered his sister-in-law on horseback in the main avenue. He stole away from the general commotion which the wine had occasioned.

The Baroness and Ellen allowed their horses to go at a foot-pace, while they held a lively conversation. The subject which they treated was woman's position in life.

"The fault with us women," said Ellen, "lies just here, that we regard ourselves as dolls in society, and do not place any higher aim before us. Just the indifference which even you manifest is a prevailing trait with all our sex and a result of our education, such as it now is. Tell me, do you really feel satisfied when you think of your past life and ask yourself the question, What is the object of my existence? Have I been of use in the spot where I was placed? Have I lived for any benefit to myself or others? What answer do you then make your conscience?"

"That I have amused myself, dressed myself, thrown away large sums of money, and yet with all this found time tedious, although it is scarcely sufficient for recreations. But what in the name of heaven would you have me do? We do not live in the patriarchal times when it was incumbent on women to fetch water from the well. What can we, who are rich and unoccupied, very well do, except, like the Egyptian woman, to adorn ourselves, amuse ourselves, and while away the time at the toilet? We are a kind of article of luxury in our rich husbands' houses, and it becomes our only occupation to flatter their vanity by our magnificence. In all times man has treated woman as a being inferior to him, and he will treat her so for all time to come. Well then, my friend, what remains to us? Only to draw the car of triumph for our masters by becoming the finest ornament in their establishment."

"Do you know, Augusta, that there is something sad in hearing a richly endowed woman like you talk in this way; and just in consequence of this I maintain my assertion, that it is woman's own disinclination to raise herself from her childish condition which makes man respect her so little. She presents a sad image of folly and spiritual poverty, and yet she wishes to be considered a thinking being. If, instead of this, she tried to cultivate her soul by acquiring knowledge, what a change would take place within her, how different would she understand her destiny! It, is alas, only the will which is wanting in us; for one can be of service in any sphere, and so regulate one's life as to be a useful member of society."

"Well, my little moralist, why do you waste your life?"

Ellen was silent.

"I will tell you; you are a slave to your husband's vanity. Your bonds are as real and more indissoluble than those of the black slave."

"Augusta, you are wrong."

"Hush, do not speak to me about Evert; I know him."

At that moment the trot of two horses was heard behind them.

"There!" exclaimed Augusta, "now we are going to be disturbed; we are probably followed by some of those gentlemen who have been drinking to such an extent that they have lost the little reason which fell to their share. I assure you, that if we women are fine dolls in society, the men are great fools in the community. Are they thinking beings, these men who get intoxicated with strong drink and heedlessly abandon themselves to all their miserable desires? If we are slaves to them, then they are slaves to their passions."

"You have an entirely too dismal philosophy of life, my dear Augusta. I, for my part, can never but admire the great things which have been accomplished in the world by women's sons, and it seems to me that there is something so beautiful, so important, in the consciousness that we, the weaker portion of the human family, have been placed at man's side as his helpmate. As daughters we care for his old age, as wives for his maturity, as mothers for his childhood. It is our sons who are to accomplish great deeds, and it is the mother who in the child's soul must sow the seeds of the man's virtues."

"Those seeds must have been very sparsely sown when the harvest of virtues has been so scanty," said Augusta.

"And why is this?" exclaimed Ellen with spirit; "because the mothers spend their lives as you and I do." The horses' tread and greeting voices were now heard close behind them.

Baron Alfred, a young man of twenty, rode forward to his sister-in-law, and Uno took his place at Ellen's side. He and Ellen had not exchanged a word since the ball.

"Perhaps we disturb the ladies," said the Baron.

"Yes indeed, and we should be greatly indebted to you, gentlemen, if you continued your ride," replied the Baroness.

"Do not be so cruel, my dear Augusta; I come with fresh greetings from a person who is dear to both ladies," continued the Baron.

"Alfred, you seem at present to have a certain disposition to talk nonsense."

"Not at all; I take the Count to witness that my words were fully in accordance with the truth." Alfred spoke with that peculiar gayety under which one tries to conceal strong emotion.

"Well, from whom then is the greeting?" asked Ellen, who found it painful to ride in silence at Uno's side. She knew that his eyes sought hers; but she did not have the courage, after what she had heard her husband utter, to meet the cold, dark look which he had fastened upon her.

"From your husband, your Grace. That he is dear to you is but natural; and to judge from his words, he seems to be the same to Augusta."

"From his words? What does that mean?" exclaimed the Baroness, and threw her head back proudly.

"Yes, from his words. He just now said in company, that Baroness Augusta Ernstein was so in love with him that he needed all his strength of soul and sense of honor to escape the snares which her love spread for him. Ah! my sister, you have been very inconsiderate to leave your heart's secret in Assessor Ochard's keeping."

"Do you mean to insult me?"

"I speak only from what I have just heard Ochard say."

"That goes too far," said the Baroness, and jerked the reins so violently that

her horse was on the point of rearing. "So mad, so foolhardy, he could not be," she added.

"Ask the Count, or whom you please of those who were present at breakfast, and they will testify to the truth of my words."

Ellen had become deadly pale during this short conversation, and an acute pain contracted the muscles of her face.

"Ellen, Ellen, your husband's behavior is unwarrantable, but I shall humiliate him, I shall — "

"Augusta, there must be some misunderstanding," said Ellen anxiously; "they have misconstrued his words."

"Misconstrued?" said the Baron; "they could not be understood in more than one way."

"Yes, they could," answered Uno seriously; "for the words which escaped Ochard were uttered while his brain was heated with wine, and what a man says at such a moment no thinking person allows himself to repeat." The Baron colored at this rebuke. "I can besides take the responsibility of declaring that the Baroness has no reason to be disquieted; for if Ochard, in his hilarious state of mind, has been inconsiderate in his utterance, I know him sufficiently well to feel sure that he will to-morrow take back the precipitate words."

"Precipitate?" exclaimed the Baroness. "This is not a question of precipitation, but of an untruth which he has uttered; and I assure you, Count, that I shall certainly force him to acknowledge that it is so."

"Allow me to make a remark. If a woman forces a man in her presence to take back what he has said about her, it does not prove that he has uttered an untruth, but only that he, from politeness, would rather admit himself a liar, than forget the respect which every well-bred man owes to a lady. But if he, on the contrary, in her absence, retracts his words, then he has in this act acknowledged that his assertion was false. Had the Baron been a little older and more accustomed to associate with men, he would not have forgotten himself so far as to repeat a few thoughtless words to his sister-in-law before he had heard Ochard take them back, which he would certainly have done after the effects of the wine had subsided; this no one who knows the chivalry which characterizes Ochard's whole behavior can well doubt."

A pause ensued. Ellen looked at Uno with an expression of warm gratitude.

"*Eh bien!* let us wait for to-morrow," exclaimed the Baroness, gayly; "but beware, Count, if you have taken his part and it is shown that he is unworthy your sympathy, for then my anger will also fall on you."

"I will submit to it in the full consciousness of having to-day spoken according to my conviction."

"Good! as the road has begun to be too narrow for four, I beg Ellen to excuse me if I take my cavalier with me and form the advance guard. I feel a great need of venting the indignation which burns within me on somebody, and who ought to be the scapegoat in my husband's absence if not his brother?"

The Baroness and Baron Alfred urged their horses forward a few yards and then allowed them to take a more moderate pace. From the lively manner in which the Baroness moved her head, one could conclude that she reprimanded her young brother-in-law in good earnest.

Ellen and Uno had been left a long way behind, and the servant rode at a distance. Ellen broke the silence, —

"Thanks for the friendly way in which you took Evert's part," said she in an almost shy voice.

"I saw how much you suffered, and I wished, at whatever price, to make the affair less unpleasant for you. I had on my conscience a wrong which I had committed against you, and for which I desired to make reparation."

"Wrong!" repeated Ellen in an unsteady voice.

"Yes! I abandoned you when you were deeply troubled .... I am a poor friend, I fear; and yet I would so gladly serve you, so gladly be to you in a brother's place. But we are not always what we would be."

Again there was a pause. Ellen felt grateful to Uno for not speaking of her husband.

"Tell me frankly, have you been vexed with me for my scarcely friendly behavior?"

"Yes, *vexed*, that is the right word," answered Ellen; "I was vexed, but not with you. I only felt that your friendship was not like mine."

"And wherein lies the difference?"

"You become easily displeased with me, are shocked at all my faults, and feel angry because I am not free from them. I know that you have faults, I perceive them, but never make them the object of search. I know that you have a noble heart, that you are a man who, with a stern sense of honor comprehend your own duty and that of others, being strict with yourself, while you are indulgent towards all others but me. I like you on account of these good qualities, without feeling provoked because you are not an ideal."

"I acknowledge the justice of your mild censure, and yet I think I can declare that my friendship for you is far stronger than that which you entertain for me."

"I do not think so. You men believe that you cherish friendship, when in reality you are only amused by the one whom you call your friend. You willingly talk with a person whose conversation entertains you, and you consider yourself to be that person's friend; but it only needs some other to awaken your interest in a still higher degree, and the former friend is nothing to you. We, on the other hand, are attracted to some moral quality, a noble deed, an evidence of a true sense of honor, of real love for humanity, of elevated thought; these are the basis of our friendship!"

"Do you give woman's love the same foundation?"

"No, not always; it is only necessary to strike some chord in our nature which sets the fancy in play, which transports it, and the poor heart follows."

"But are you entitled to judge of that which concerns love? Have you ever loved, or can you even comprehend what love is?"

Uno would have given a good deal if he had been able to look in Ellen's heart at this moment and there read the answer to his question. But the searching glance was in vain. He could not even see her eyes, for they were lowered. She replied quite calmly, —

"How can you ask me such a question, when you know that I married from love?"

Uno spurred his horse, causing him to spring forward. Then he said,—

"The Baroness seems to be giving her brother-in-law a good scolding."

They talked awhile about indifferent things, and soon joined their companions. After resting in a beautiful spot, they all returned home. On coming to a place where the road narrowed, Ellen spurred her horse and said to Augusta, with a smile, —

"Now it is our turn to form the advance guard."

When they had gone a little way ahead of the others, Uno said, —

"You wished to tell me something?"

"Yes, but I find difficulty in clothing it in words."

"In spite of your friendship for me?"

"Yes, in spite of it, I am in embarrassment."

"It concerns your husband. Have I guessed right?"

"Perfectly! I desire that you may not say anything to him with regard to

the words which he dropped concerning the Baroness." There was something so beseeching in look and voice, that Uno's heart was softened, while he thought with bitter indignation how little Ochard knew how to value his good fortune in possessing Ellen for a wife.

"The most insignificant desire of yours is a law to me," replied Uno.

"Thanks!"

"But remember that the Baroness has a right to demand satisfaction."

"She shall have it, and you shall not have defended him in vain. Believe me, he deserves the good opinion which you entertain of him."

"He, and he alone, always takes up your whole soul. You are an admirable wife, Ellen, and I would rather die than live to see the day when you ceased to be what you now are."

He spoke sincerely. He had too fresh and uncorrupted a heart to be able to love any one whom he did not esteem.

"I am a very imperfect wife," answered Ellen, who felt so calm, so happy from his words, "and I need all my husband's indulgence."

The road widened again and they could now ride abreast.

When the horses stopped before the gate, Uno jumped off his and hastened to lift Ellen down. For a moment violent feelings stirred in his breast, and he felt an irresistible desire to press her to his heart. But his will was stronger than his passion, and he lifted her from the saddle without even his arm's trembling.

"I shall leave at about twelve o'clock," said Evert to his wife the following morning.

"But before this you have a mistake to rectify, a scandal to avert," replied Ellen, and proceeded to relate what Baron Alfred had mentioned to the Baroness, as well as the latter's determination to force Evert to take back what he had said before the whole company, if he did not do it of himself. Evert fell into a passion, burst out against the Baron, and would not hear of such a thing as retracting his words. But Ellen took his hand, telling him how all, even those who had heard his words, would approve such a course, and that he would be honored for it. The Baroness herself would be compelled to forgive him. Ellen tried to excite his vanity, so that *it* should induce him to act according to the requirements of honor, and she finally succeeded; he conducted her down to the saloon, while he considered the effect of what he was forced to do. All the merry guests who had been at the breakfast the day before surrounded him to express their thanks for the pleasant occasion; among their number were the young Baron Ernstein and Uno.

"I certainly believe that Count Kerner is in the wrong," thought Baron Alfred; "he is not likely to take back what he has once said."

"Let us see if Ellen has succeeded in inducing that fool to act like an honorable man," thought Uno.

"Gentlemen," said Ochard in a loud voice. "Wine sometimes tempts us in a merry company to utter things which are only the offspring of our heated imaginations. I was guilty of such an error yesterday, when I spoke in a manner not at all in accordance with the truth, of a lady for whom I entertain the greatest respect and admiration. I now therefore recall my words, and declare that I talked at random; and I desire that you, gentlemen, may consider them unsaid."

By nature a very good actor, Evert had assumed so noble a bearing and carried his handsome head with so much spirit, that his speech made a very favorable impression, for every one regarded his conduct as an evidence of mag-

nanimity. Still, there was not one of these young gentlemen who did not hold to the belief that the Baroness was in love with Ochard. They had too poor an opinion of women in general to give credence to anything but what was derogatory to the sex. Besides, they were endowed with too high an opinion of their own worth to admit that Ochard's boast was altogether groundless.

Three weeks had elapsed since the occurrence described above. People had bathed, danced, and arranged pleasure-parties.

Ellen had spent every day with Uno. He was the tenderest brother, the most respectful friend, and the most agreeable society for the young woman. His manifold acquirements, the freshness of his feelings, his noble and uncorrupted character, were revealed in this daily intercourse. Ellen felt happy, and she appeared more lively and interested than she was wont to be. The Baroness, who resided with her, was also especially entertained by Uno's society. Time fled like a dream, and Ellen fancied, during this brief period of pure and unalloyed joy, that nature had become more beautiful, that life had obtained for her a new, hitherto unknown charm, and that God's goodness was greater than before. Still, this happy time was very short. Ellen resembled a child who reposes by an abyss, but does not perceive the dark gulf, for the flowers which surround it. She enjoyed life, thanked God most fervently for the feeling of satisfaction that filled her breast, and did not notice the danger. But chance was to snatch the bandage quite suddenly from her eyes and put her strength of soul to a severe test.

One evening, after supper, the Baroness, Ellen, Uno, and a German doctor, who was spending a few days at ***, took a promenade to the beach. The weather was clear and the wind blew fresh. The Baroness and the doctor, who were engaged in an animated conversation, so hastened their steps that they were soon far ahead of Ellen and Uno. On reaching the shore Uno's attention was fastened on an object out at sea, while Ellen continued the subject they had begun, without observing that his answers became more and more brief. Finally he stopped, saying as he stretched out his hand towards the sea, —

"See, Ellen, how that little boat struggles with the waves."

Ellen's eyes followed the direction of his hand. In a little boat she saw a solitary woman, apparently old, who was rowing towards the land with all her power; but the little bark seemed rather to recede from the force of the wind, than to advance. Sometimes the woman leaned her face against the hands which held the oars, as if she had wept over her impotent efforts.

"Ah, good God! she will certainly never be able to row to land," said Ellen, and followed all the motions of the little boat with anxiety.

"So it looks, especially as the wind increases." Uno looked around to see if there was not some one in the vicinity whom he could ask to assist the poor woman; but he discovered no one, only a little skiff which lay swinging by the strand.

"Ellen, return home, for you will not be able to catch up with the Baroness. I will help the old woman." While Uno spoke he had sprung down to the beach and into the boat. Ellen stood still. "Go, Ellen, go; it blows cold," cried he, and unfastened the boat; but she remained motionless.

He was soon far from land and rowing rapidly towards the woman. As he advanced he was equally driven by the waves, and Ellen followed with unshaken attention all the motions of the frail

craft. She dared not breathe; it was as if her whole existence had depended on the skiff's movements, so much anxiety lay in the look with which she followed it. The wind had increased during the few moments which had elapsed since Uno pushed off, so that the waves rolled forward crested with foam. At last he reached the old woman and with a rash leap transferred himself to her boat. Then he took the oars and began to row towards the shore with all his might. Ellen had pressed both hands to her heart to still its beating when he sprang from the skiff into the boat, and she could not see but what both he and the woman would become the prey of the waves. It was arduous work, for they had a contrary wind; but after a half-hour's hard rowing they touched the shore. Ellen sprang down the slope, and when Uno jumped from the boat, she reached him both hands with the words, —

"Merciful heavens, what fearful anxiety I have endured! Had the boat upset, my heart would have burst."

Uno seized the two hands that were extended to him and faltered in a voice full of emotion and passion, —

"O Ellen, beloved, adored Ellen, why am I not allowed to die in this moment of bliss!"

Uno had once desired to be able to read Ellen's heart. Now, when their eyes met, when hers rested on him with so enchanting an expression, he seemed to see his wish realized. The two looked at each other for some moments, as if fearing to break the spell with words. The old woman's voice close by roused them. Ellen started as if she had awoke from a dream, blushed, and drew away her hands. Uno turned with a sigh to the woman, who exhausted herself in blessing him.

Directly afterwards they heard the Baroness's voice; she had turned back with the German doctor when she at last missed them. It blew hard, and they took their way home. As Ellen and Uno were going up the bank, he said with that peculiar accent which only love can bestow, "Take my arm, Ellen." He bent down to catch one more glance. Ellen laid her hand on his arm and looked at him; but her eyes were obscured with tears.

Uno was now obliged to relate his adventure to the Baroness, but not a word more was exchanged between him and Ellen. At parting he released her hand with a lingering motion.

When Ellen had separated from the Baroness and shut herself up in her chamber, she fell on her knees. With her hands clasped tightly and her head leaning against them, she wept, wept from the depth of her heart, while with fervent devotion she prayed to God for strength to rightly make up the account with herself and to gain the victory over her weak, rebellious heart.

How much had not these hours which had passed since she left home contained for her! What a fearful light had not the events at the strand thrown over her inner being and the feelings she cherished for Uno! While with boundless anxiety she followed the motions of the boat, it had become clear to her that the frail bark bore a man who was so dear to her heart that she would willingly have saved his life with the sacrifice of her own. And then when he stood there before her, when she again met his glance, again felt her hands clasped in his, how thankful to God, how unspeakably happy had she not been! This anguish, this joy, seemed to say to her with a merciless voice, "You love him."

Ellen could have sunk into the dust at this thought. She, who had only striven toward one aim, that of conscientiously fulfilling her duty to her husband, was now in her heart a faithless wife. None but those who revere duty as deeply as she did can understand her

grief and remorse when she knelt before God and wept over herself.

"Shall everything then fail me!" she sobbed, "even my own heart? Domestic happiness, my husband's love, — all is denied me; shall I also lose respect for myself?"

She did not try to excuse herself to her accusing conscience by any false reasoning. She did not draw up her husband's faults as an apology for herself. She did not reproach him for having thoughtlessly abandoned her to danger. She did not think of his indifference to extenuate her own fault. No, she accused no one but herself. With her thoughts fastened only on her own weakness, she made up the account with herself; and without being tempted for a single moment by the infatuating delusion that her silent, apparently guiltless love hurt nobody, she resolved to fly a danger which she felt that her heart was not strong enough to resist. Not an instant's happiness would she purchase at the expense of her duty. A felicity at this price would have been changed to an eternally gnawing remorse.

The next day Ellen was not seen at the baths. Uno had presented himself to inquire after her health, while he constantly repeated to himself, —

"I must from her own lips hear the words, 'I love you,' and then, — then I will fly far hence."

When he came to Ellen's abode, Ingrid told him that her mistress was ill. The physician said that she had taken cold.

A week elapsed, during which Ellen was obliged to keep within doors.

One Sunday morning the Baroness informed Uno that Ellen was better, and that she would in the afternoon be present at the coffee-party to which one of the ladies had invited the whole company.

When Ellen and the Baroness stepped out to go to the saloon, Uno came towards them. He only saw Ellen. With an animation which reflected all that his heart felt, he went to her and said, as he greeted her with an expression of admiration, joy, love, and respect, —

"I shall never forgive myself for having been the cause of your indisposition, and yet I cannot regret an event which afforded me — "

"An opportunity to help a creature who without you would have been lost," fell in Ellen in a somewhat unsteady voice.

Uno walked a moment in silence by her side; then he began to talk on indifferent subjects with an expression of gladness which was very rare with him.

After drinking coffee in the saloon, the party had a little music, and then spread themselves in small groups in the park. Ellen, who was fatigued and disposed to be quiet, had seated herself on one of the small sofas in the saloon. Uno approached her.

"So pale and so sad? I for my part know no bounds to my joy at seeing you again."

Ellen shuddered and would have stifled the violent beating of her heart.

"During the days in which I have been separated from you, Ellen, but one memory has followed me, — that of the moment when you met me on the beach. O Ellen, when shall that moment come again?"

"Never!" whispered she.

"You cannot be so cruel. Look at me, Ellen, and say that the love which has dwelt in the depths of my heart for so many years deserves some consolation. Hear me, Ellen. I shall not leave you until your lips have confirmed what your look told me. I must hear from you three words, — three words."

"Hush, Uno!" She rose and offered him her hand, as she said with a sorrow-

ful smile, "To-morrow I will explain myself." With this she went away.

"To-morrow," said Uno exultingly, — "to-morrow!"

The morning came with a sky so gray and a fog so thick, that one fancied the very atmosphere breathed sorrow. But to Uno this gray sky seemed clear and smiling, this air sweet and warm, for he awoke with the hope of having his highest desire fulfilled. How it would be afterwards, he did not think. The expected explanation was all to him. He had just begun to dress himself, when the servant handed him a letter. The address told him from whom it was.

He opened it and read: —

"Once you said, when you offered me your friendship: 'You shall never have cause to regret the friendship which you now give me.' Have you kept this promise? Ought I not now bitterly to deplore the moment when we became friends? Lay your hand on your own upright heart and answer the question.

"At another time you said, 'It has often pained me when I reflected that you could believe me capable of so despicable an act as to speak to a married woman of love.' You have now been guilty of such an act.

"My husband intrusted his wife to you. Will you, with your stern ideas of honor, betray this trust? The Uno who was my friend, who stood high in my esteem, will not be guilty of such a crime. He will revere the woman who rendered him her respect, her confidence, and her friendship. Passion will never tempt him to forget what he owes his own honor, the absent husband, and the married woman.

"Once you said, 'Ellen, you are an admirable wife; I do not wish to live to the day when I find you otherwise.' And yet you begged me yesterday to acknowledge that I loved you, that my heart had failed of its duty and betrayed the mate to whom I swore eternal faith at the altar. If I fulfilled your prayer, should I then be an admirable wife? No, I should be a contemptible perjurer, who trampled respect for her duty under her feet, and no time and no conditions would have been able to efface this stain upon my life. Now I have said all that I have to say; for the rest, when you have awakened from the delirium which misled you, your own heart will tell you what you have come near forgetting.

"One single prayer has Ellen to her friend Uno, and she knows that he will fulfil it. Do not try to see me for several days. Take a trip to X—— or any other place around here, or keep within doors. This banishment or imprisonment shall be short, but Ellen will feel grateful for such a compliance with her request.

"And now farewell! The memory of friend Uno shall always be faithfully preserved by

"Ellen."

Uno sat motionless a long time; a tear shone in his eye, and he carried Ellen's letter to his lips.

"O, how could I for a moment think that she should act otherwise, noble, high-minded woman! May God preserve me from wishing to stain your snow-white wings!" He again read through this letter, so mild and yet so earnest. Then he wrote: —

"Thanks, angel! I shall ever remember you as the noblest woman I have known. I will obey you and remain in my room until Ellen releases me from captivity. Forget everything which bears witness that I have forgotten the promise I gave, — to be an honest and faithful friend.

"But I also have a prayer to Ellen, the only one which I shall ever address to her: sing this evening the ballad which you sang at Löda; sing it after all have retired and before you close your win-

dows. Ellen, this is all that I will ask of you in this life! Show this single proof of good-will to your friend

"UNO."

In the afternoon the heavens cleared, the sun sank in a bed of purple; the queen of night, with her invisible mantle and starry diadem, had embraced the earth, upon which everything was now still and quiet. All seemed to be deep in slumber at ***, only a solitary being stood leaning motionless against a tree by the house where Ellen and the Baroness resided, and where the windows still stood open. He was pale, this lonely figure, who with an expression of anguish seemed to be waiting for something. Suddenly the silence was broken by a song from Ellen's dwelling. It was like a spirit whisper from a better world. The invisible singer sang each verse twice, and "the song, it flew over the waves," and everything again became silent both within and without the isolated house.

Two days afterwards Uno received the following note: —

"Uno, you are free; your captivity has ceased, I am now gone. I know that you will not see me again until you can do it with perfect calmness. In two days I shall be with my husband. Your friend,

"ELLEN."

"Gone, gone!" exclaimed Uno springing up. "I know that you will not see me again until you can do it calmly," repeated he. "O Ellen, Ellen! the poor happiness of seeing you ought still to have been granted me!"

One beautiful morning towards the end of July, two days after Uno had received the above-mentioned note, Assessor Ochard stood tying his cravat before the glass. He tied it certainly for the twentieth time, for he could not get it to suit him. Just as he had succeeded in his efforts, and with a self-satisfied look fastened his vest, the door-curtains were lifted and a tastefully attired lady entered. Evert, who in the glass saw a lady come in, turned round, and exclaimed when his eyes fell on her face, —

"Ellen! Good God, what does this mean?"

She hastened to her husband, and reached out her arms to him.

"Yes, it is Ellen, who was obliged to return to you."

"You have thus longed for me, is it not so?" said Evert, and embraced his wife very carefully, so as not to wrinkle his shirt-bosom. "But, my dear Ellen, however flattering it may be to have you long for me so ardently, I am still very sorry that you left *** in this precipitate way. What will people say about so sudden a departure? They will try to guess the cause, and you expose us both to a multitude of constructions which it would have been wiser of you to avoid by remaining till the end of the season."

"Ah, Evert, believe me when I assure you with my hand on my heart, that I neither would nor could stay."

There was something so mild and yet sad in Ellen's voice that it engaged his attention. He looked at the clock.

"It is very agreeable for me to find that I am so dear to you, and I shall with the greatest pleasure, when I return, hear you relate how tedious it was without me, but at present I am a little pressed for time."

Ellen had taken off her hat and mantle and seated herself on a little sofa. She reached her hand to her husband.

"Come and sit here with me, Evert. I shall be contented again, if I only see that you like me a little bit."

Evert seated himself, kissed Ellen on the brow, and said, —

"But, my beloved wife, I am obliged to be at Counsellor D——'s at eleven o'clock, so that we have not much more than half an hour, consequently the exchange of tender sentiments must be brief. I should not like to present myself to the Counsellor with any traces of emotion, but with a calmness and an assurance which are in harmony with the prospects to which I am entitled. Well, have you had a pleasant time? Your letters seemed to show that this was the case. I have had a great deal to do; but I thought that the government, at the close of the Diet, would reward my services. Apropos, you did not travel alone? I suppose Uno has kept you company?"

"No, he remained. I travelled with Ingrid."

"That was very inconsiderate. You ought to have informed me of your coming, so that I could have sent the carriage to meet you. Do you know, Ellen, your journey here is directly contrary to general custom, and I predict that people will make remarks about it. You ought to make it a rule never to act without first asking my advice."

"Evert," said Ellen seriously, laying her hand on his arm, "it was no longer a question of what people would say; it was necessary for me to see you again and in your presence come into closer relations with holy duties."

"My dear Ellen, you are very romantic, and that to the great detriment of your reputation as a woman of the world. The duty which we ought in the first place to observe is to deport ourselves in such a way that we do not give society occasion to blame our actions. Then come the private duties. Therefore I tell you once more, that neither love, longing, or anything whatsoever ought to have induced you to travel here post-haste, without at least having Uno accompany you as a protector."

"But, has it never occurred to you that there might be danger for your wife in commissioning a young man to be her constant attendant?"

"Bah, my dear, I have calculated it all. I am a born diplomat. I should not be against it at all if Uno took a lively fancy to you. When a man is governed by a passion he is always the slave of the one who excited this passion, and Uno would in this way serve my interests blindly by doing everything that you desired."

"Evert, Evert! do you not consider the danger to which you expose me?"

"Not at all. I am not romantic, neither do I see danger where none exists. Now, if you were also a little interested in him — *Eh bien*, it would be of no consequence, as you once for all love me and could certainly never have the bad taste to prefer a man of his appearance. Such a lack of discernment I would never forgive you. Now I think it excellent that he, a noble, wealthy, and courted young man is the first to render my wife homage. Besides it is the acquaintance with him and his brother-in-law upon which I count in order to arrive rapidly at distinction; and I confess that you would have done me a far greater service if you had remained, with or without the danger of captivating his heart, than by going away from him in that way, and perhaps through this gaining me an enemy in one who I hoped would favor my plans."

"Evert, Evert, is this all that you have to say to me?" said Ellen, sobbing.

"My dear Ellen, it seems to me that you ought to be satisfied when I assure you that I feel flattered by your affection, although I desire that you may be less romantic." Evert kissed her and then looked at the clock. "I must now leave you. Efface the traces of your tears, and let us no longer speak of this

matter. We will see each other again." He kissed his hand to her and left. When he stepped into his carriage he thought, —

"I am only afraid that Ellen, frightened by some tender words from Uno, has offended him. The result of this may be that I miss the star."

"O God! thou wilt not abandon me, if all others fail!" sighed Ellen with clasped hands.

THE MOTHER.

THREE YEARS LATER.

In Assessor Ochard's elegant bedchamber one November afternoon, Ellen sat beside a willow cradle which she gently set in motion. She leaned her head on her hand and regarded the little sleeping boy with an expression of such pure and unmixed happiness, such boundless love, that one could read plainly in her face that she had now obtained an object upon which she fastened all her feelings, thoughts, and dreams. This face no longer bore traces of the unquiet and formless dreams, or the passive indifference which had formerly characterized it. It reflected a soul which had ripened to the clearly defined knowledge that it had a sacred and precious destiny to fulfil. It was evident that her heart no longer flagged from weariness and longing, but with loud, fresh beats filled her breast with the happy consciousness of possessing a being to love and live for. She did not receive the dawning day with a listless mind: she knew that every moment of her life was indispensable to this child, who was her whole world.

There is in the love of a mother something so pure, so wholly disinterested, that it is like a divine spark in the human heart placed in the midst of its miserable and selfish desires. With what ineffable tenderness does not the mother press her child to her heart! How completely does she not forget her own need of shelter and protection, in protecting and sheltering the little tender being which rests upon her breast! How strong is she not in her sacrifices, how unwearied in her efforts and her care! How patiently does she not suffer and struggle for her child's joy and future happiness! She lays all calculation aside when these are concerned. What does it signify to a mother what she suffers, if she can only purchase freedom from suffering for her child? And this love, so boundless and so self-denying, what does it obtain in return? Does the mother become the most precious object of the grown-up man or woman's affection? No. When the child ripens to maturity, the thought of the mother steps back for other feelings and interests which take up the young heart and mind; and while her love is eternally the same, she must be thankful to destiny if it allows her to occupy the second or third place in the heart of the grown-up child. If she is a wise mother who recollects her own youth, then she will be satisfied and contented with this state of things, without demanding more than can be given. Ah! how soon are not her watchings, her tears, and her care forgotten when they are no longer needed, and how often does it not happen that she sees herself neglected by the same child for whom she would without hesitation have sacrificed her life!

While Ellen rocked her little, scarcely two-years-old boy to sleep, and with loving tenderness contemplated the sweet, blooming face, the door-curtains were lifted and Evert entered. When he saw his wife sitting by the cradle he frowned, and his countenance, cloudy before, became at this sight still more so.

"Is there no one who can rock the child, without your making yourself a child's nurse? I must say, it has begun to be very pleasant; my house is changed

into a great nursery, and it would not surprise me in the least if, some fine day, I saw you promenading in the street with the child in your arms. It is a positive fact that you have not the slightest discrimination; you follow your fancy blindly, without inquiring where it leads."

"Dear Evert, is it not our child to whose care I devote my life, and you, surely do not wish me to neglect it? You yourself think so much of the boy."

"Yes, with the difference, that I love my child with reason, and not, like you, in a silly way. But leave this, at least for the present; I will take up the subject again directly; but I desire you to charge the nurse to rock the boy, so that I may have the pleasure of talking with you without running the risk of being interrupted by the child's screams or by coming and going. Will you therefore step into the cabinet?"

Evert went to the bell-cord, pulled it violently, and when Ingrid entered he said in a commanding tone, —

"I do not wish my wife to be obliged to act as child's nurse, and therefore I will ask mamsell to tell the nurse to stay with the child." With this he left the room.

Ellen rose, fastened another look full of indescribable tenderness on the sleeping babe, then nodded to Ingrid and went into the cabinet, where she found her husband sitting on the sofa. She went to him with a smile and passed her hand caressingly over his curly hair, saying, —

"Well, here I am. Are you going to scold me still more? I hope you will not; I feel so happy in the moments when I am allowed to be with my child."

"Dear Ellen, forbear from caressing me, your caresses are of no use. You sacrifice me just as soon to your egotism, and if you are happy, then I congratulate you. As far as I am concerned, I cannot say the same."

"Evert, you are now bitter."

"Possibly; but when one is unhappy, as I am, he cannot always suppress his feelings and look glad and smiling." He sighed.

"Has anything unpleasant occurred?"

"Unpleasant? Why, I have had nothing else ever since you took that silly notion to play the hermit, only for the sake of tending the child and never having it out of your sight. What shall I call your behavior? You, a rich woman, the wife of a man whose merits have raised him in the community to an equality with noblemen, you who can afford to pay for things, you from some romantic whim or other undertake to nurse your child yourself, to withdraw from society and change our house into a cloister. What do you suppose people will think of all this? They will say that I have not sufficient love for you to procure a nurse; that from meanness, from indifference, and God knows what, I allow you to drag around with the child. How many women of wealth and position do you know who make themselves nurses? I think you will have difficulty to find half a dozen, and not a single one with your more weighty interests, as nature has made you a poetess! But what do you care for an illustrious name or the renown of a genius? Nothing at all. You live for your fixed ideas, and among these is the notion that you must be tied to the boy. You tear down, in your simple comprehension of life, all that I have done to have you regarded as a woman of genius, and you, who rose like a star, now fall quite suddenly to the level of a child's nurse." Evert stopped for breath. Ellen said nothing. "But now I must declare emphatically that I am tired of this performance, and intend to resume our former manner of life, as I think of taking part in the boy's bringing up. Does it seem to you, for example, that he is dressed like a rich man's child? I wish the boy to be so dressed as to look engaging. Besides, it is my desire

that we have a reception once a week, and parties as before. I wish you to show yourself again in society, and to divide your time somewhat between it and the child."

"Can you actually say, Evert, that I do not? How glad and happy I am, when you are sometimes at home with us, when — "

"Allow me to interrupt you. We do not live on your happiness and contentment alone, but we have also duties towards the world, and I find no reason why a man should be obliged to neglect these for the sake of his wife and child. You have now heard my will, and I hope that you will conform yourself to it."

"I shall endeavor to unite my duty toward my home with your desire, but never shall I, for any price in the world, neglect our child. I am a mother, and God has intrusted to my care a child, who will some day become a man."

"And I am certainly not likely to ask you to forget your duty as a mother; but, to begin with, I must tell you that I have invited a few friends here this evening, and Uno among them. I desire you to be particularly polite to him, for I need him."

"Do you need him any longer?"

"Yes, I need his influence and his reputation as a wealthy man, especially now, as I am seeking an office and intend to take up a loan of ten thousand riks thalers, and that from a man who places value on Uno's opinion, and who will certainly inquire of him about me."

"Are you obliged to borrow? You are surely jesting."

"Will you be so good as to look at me and see if I am jesting?"

"But are we then no longer rich?"

"O yes, you are, my dear; but alas, not I," answered Evert bitterly. "Or do you actually think that one hundred thousand riks thalers is a bottomless gold mine, when one, like me, is obliged to live in the world and keep up appearances? You, with your imaginative mind, may think that it does not cost anything to live, to keep a carriage and horses and the like, which my position demands. If one has then the misfortune to have some bachelor debts to pay, and besides this is obliged to deduct from the capital what an establishment such as ours costs, you can easily see that one hundred thousand riks thalers is no inexhaustible treasure."

"But Evert," replied Ellen, "rather than to borrow in this way and through this place yourself under obligation, you could give a mortgage on the house."

"Will you show me the goodness not to mingle in my affairs? Or do you imagine that you can attend to them better than I? For the rest I will not mortgage the house. In short, I must take up this loan; and I intend, in case the king does not give me the office which I am now seeking, to employ a part of this sum for the publishing of an opposition paper. Everything will depend upon my nomination."

"Evert, what do you say? Will you, who have received so many proofs of favor from the king, and been so richly rewarded for all that you have done, will you, an office-holder, a Knight of the North Star, a conservative, become a turncoat and attack the same views which you formerly defended? That would be ungrateful and unworthy a man of honor."

"My dear, the time of kings is past. The February revolution has made them unpopular, so that one is entirely out of the fashion if he is a royalist. They must therefore see to it that they support those who served with zeal and faithfulness; for in any other event I shall be compelled to pay homage to the revolutionary principles. To appear as their advocate would give me greater popularity than I should ever be able to reap in the service of conservatism."

"A man of honor does not serve a

cause from calculation, but from conviction, and I neither can nor will think so meanly of you as to suppose that for the sake of winning popularity or any distinction in the world, you would wish to *sell yours*, or betray the cause which you defended, and thus bargain with your duty and your conscience."

"My dear, you do not understand that matter; I intend in all cases to act as I please, and only ask you to comply with my wishes; to begin with, in regard to Uno."

"But it is just with regard to him that I wish you to change your plan. Why do you need his influence? If you are entitled to the appointment which you wish to obtain, you can be very sure that you will be nominated, without the need of his co-operation. Ah! Evert, it pains me to think that you, a man of merit, can be obliged to cringe to those in high places in order to gain a promotion to which your deserts ought to entitle you. As far as the loan is concerned, I hope it will be unnecessary; for as you know, I have always desired that you should receive the interest of the capital which my mother left solely at my disposal. Hitherto you have refused, upon the ground that you did not wish to have anything of which you had been deprived. I am likely, in consequence of this, to have a no inconsiderable residue of the interest remaining with merchant D——. At one time I intended this little amount as a fund for a children's home; but now I desire and entreat you to dispose of it, and hereafter to collect the interest which ought to be eventually ours."

"As far as your savings are concerned, I have already drawn them, because I was in need of money at our arrival in the city. I must consequently borrow from the person I mentioned; I need Uno, and it is of importance to me that no one has any suspicion that I am in want of money. Have you understood me?"

"But this money must be paid back some time?"

"Of course, and I also intend to do it; although I am at present in need, it does not prove that I am ruined. The richest man, my dear Ellen, is sometimes obliged to borrow."

"Why not rather turn to Uncle Rubens or to Kerner?"

"Because I am not disposed to hear any remarks. But I do not know why we continue this conversation. You have heard my desire: comply with it."

"One word more," said Ellen with anguish. "I will sell all my trinkets, if you will only not make debts; for my reason tells me that if one begins to solicit credit, it ends ill."

"Do you mean to irritate me, to wound and humiliate me? Now listen once for all to what I say: I will not hear of any retrenchments in our way of life; nothing in your attire or your habits must be changed. You are to continue a rich man's wife. Do you now understand that I never can, never shall, live otherwise than I have hitherto done? I wish people to see you with these jewels which excited so much envy and admiration, and I hope that I shall never be obliged to give this up. Spare me all further talk on this disagreeable subject. Apropos, I desire you, as formerly, to collect the income from your property, so that no one may know that we use it in common; but you can then give me the money, and in that way it will all be arranged right. I really think that I can manage that income better than you, so that it will give an added lustre to our establishment. On Monday we are to have a large party." Evert went out.

"With borrowed money," murmured Ellen. "One day his vanity will perhaps be our ruin." She sighed deeply. "All must be consumed then to shine among a crowd of fools, who, when misfortune knocks at the door, will fly us. But I feel that I shall now have the

strength to save my child's father from the abyss to which his heedless vanity will sooner or later lead us."

In the evening the rooms were lighted, and Ellen had just stepped into the saloon, when at the same moment a young man was seen at one of the doors. She stopped a second in the middle of the floor, but took some steps directly towards the guest who advanced to meet her. Both were pale. It was over three years since they had seen each other. Three years! How different Ellen now was! How changed did life appear! What a treasure of tenderness and soul strength had been developed in her since then! And yet the recollection of their last conversation stood forth so vividly in her mind. How many bitter struggles had she not fought since then, and what a rich reward had God not given her for going victorious from the strife? Did Uno read in her face the higher degree of growth and inner peace which she had attained? So it seemed; for there was an expression of grief, and yet of satisfaction in the look which he fastened upon her. He seized the extended hand, and said with deep earnestness, —

"'Before Uno can meet Ellen with calmness, he must not try to see her.' These were your last words to me. I have preserved them in my memory, guarded them in my heart, and obeyed you. With a calm, deep, earnest friendship, free from any shade of passion, I again see you, else I should never have crossed your threshold."

"Thanks! I knew that Uno was noble in thought and feeling."

Evert's entrance and the arrival of several guests interrupted the conversation.

The gentlemen chatted and played cards. Ellen was an extremely lovely hostess. The occasional dreaminess and abstraction was now gone. A great calm rested over her whole being. She no longer fell into transports, but every word evinced a trusting and discerning mind, while her conversation breathed genius and superiority, but a superiority which was in no way unbecoming to the woman.

Several of the gentlemen had gathered around her, and among them President S***. They were talking about woman's minority, and all the more or less exalted propositions to emancipate her, which constituted the subject of most of the conversation and writing of the time.

"So richly endowed a woman as you must naturally be of the opinion that woman ought to become of age in Sweden, as well as in France and other countries?" said the President.

"I really dare not express myself on the subject," answered Ellen, smiling, "for I might seem to be entirely mistaken in the worth of my sex. But I certainly think that woman's physical and spiritual nature is such that she must absolutely have a support in man. What is more, I do not consider her sufficiently grown to step out from her condition of minority, for her education, as it is now conducted, is not calculated to develop her mental powers so that she can manage her property or take care of herself alone. What are we women at present but fine dolls in society; or when we do not have fortune, simply cooks and child's nurses? But we are not educators and housewives."

"But how remedy this lack?" said Uno.

"It is hard to remedy, just for the reason that woman's especial education ought to start from the family life, and not from the schools."

"Then you do not think that public schools would contribute to her development?"

"Yes, to the intellectual very essentially, but not to the moral. In the latter the mother alone plays the chief part. She is to sow the seeds of the

good in the child's heart; she is to teach her daughter by example in the home to be devoted and self-sacrificing. No instruction at school is able to develop a girl's faculty for domestic duties, so that she may become a good wife, a tender and judicious mother. That is something which she must take with her from the home, which must stand objectively before her from childhood and follow her through her whole life."

"You thus consider it unnecessary to give woman any higher intellectual education?"

"Not at all. The cultivation of the intellect is essential to her higher soul development, as feeling, when not led by the reason, is only a blind instinct. Besides, how important it is, so to cultivate her understanding that, with discernment and a clear consciousness of her high destiny, she may be able to fulfil it; but the cold reason alone cannot create any devoted wife or loving mother. Therefore the education which proceeds from the home is the most important."

"So you do not wish woman to become of age?"

"Yes, as a thinking and free being she is entitled to it; but she ought to be so educated, that her increased privileges do not become a source of misfortune instead of freedom and happiness; this education she does not receive now. She is brought up for the condition of a minor, and all her habits obtain such a direction that she neither can be nor ought to be regarded as a free being. The only aim has been to teach girls some accomplishments with which they could shine. That they might one day be obliged to think for themselves, to manage their affairs or have a plan for life, was something which never came in question."

"It is strange to hear a woman express herself in this way."

"Why so? All depends upon whether we still preserve our illusions, instead of taking experience as a teacher. At my age one has left the former and entered the school of the latter."

One morning a few days after this conversation, Ellen stood in the saloon with her little boy in her arms and let him look at his father's portrait, while she tried to make him comprehend that it was "papa."

The door of the anteroom opened and a servant said, —

"Please walk in, Herr Count; the Assessor will be at leisure directly as soon as Baron H—— leaves him."

Ellen turned towards the door; it was Uno. When he saw Ellen with the boy in her arms, there was a singular light in his eyes; but he made a violent effort and succeeded in repressing his emotion. He advanced with apparent calmness to greet her, while she put her little boy down on the floor. The boy made a bow and said something which was meant for "good morning."

Uno lifted the child up, kissed him, and asked, —

"What is your name?"

"Eon," was the answer.

"Elon," said Ellen. She took her little boy by the hand and asked Uno to step into the other room, where she seated herself on a sofa, with the child in her lap.

"It is the general complaint that you have deprived society of its brightest ornament when you are missing. What has been able to induce one who is really entitled to be regretted, so suddenly to abandon the scene of her triumphs?"

"And can you ask that?" said Ellen, smiling. "I should think that the question was unnecessary when I have the reason of my absence in my lap."

"Do you feel no regret for those pleasures which you embraced before with so much interest?"

"How could I? What value do they possess in comparison with the joy which my child gives me?"

"That child then constitutes your whole world?"

"No, half. My husband constitutes the first half of it."

"These two are thus all to you?"

"Yes. Ought they not to be?"

"You are right, Ellen, and you will surely be as good a mother as you are a wife."

"I should like to be both, but fear that it stops only at the desire."

Evert entered, and when he saw his wife with the child in her arms, he said to Uno as he smiled sourly, —

"Ellen is determined to play the part of child's nurse, although I have warned her in the tenderest manner against the over-exertion; but my prayers now as always have no effect upon her."

"I do not over-exert myself," replied Ellen with so mild and loving an expression, that Uno thought, —

"His place would be to kneel at her feet. What a treasure he possesses in this wife!"

Evert's thought did not by any means go in the same direction. He was provoked at Ellen for sitting with the child in her lap like any burgher wife, when he wished her to appear in every respect as the type of an aristocratic lady. Besides he wished Uno to admire his love and tenderness to her, and therefore he resumed, —

"Ah! my dear, you exert yourself too much, with your delicate health and sensitive nerves."

"O, I am young, strong, and healthy," said Ellen, pressing the boy to her heart. "Besides, you are so careful lest I should tax my strength too much, that, with the best intentions, I cannot content you." She gave him her hand kindly and left the room.

Her last words dissipated slightly the cloud of displeasure which had for a moment rested on Evert's brow. He smiled and said, —

"It always goes in just this way. I try to be stern, but I am conquered by a smile."

"And who would not be conquered by a mother who loves her child?" said Uno. "I scarcely know anything more beautiful. I am seized with reverence at the sight."

"So is it also with me," said Evert; and throwing a glance in the mirror, he gave his face an interesting expression.

The amusements of the winter season were again in full career. Ellen appeared now and then in society, but her stay was quite short. She was never seen more than a little while at any place, and then she was so lovely, so captivating, that one saw her disappear with real regret, after she had for a few moments been the object of general admiration. The women asserted that it was a coquettish *ruse* in the young married woman, who wished to let her admirers feel the void which she left behind her. They said much more than this; but it entered no one's mind that she hastened from the pleasures, flattery, and vanity of the saloon in order to take her place by the cradle of her sleeping child, or to let it rest in her arms. That she showed herself in company like a meteor, to shine and disappear, came from the fact that her husband required it, and she had made it a law to please him so far as lay in her power, although never at the expense of her child's care. The former way of life in her own house was again commenced. A number of so-called friends assembled there once a week, besides all the invited companies. All attempts at retrenchment on Ellen's part were fruitless, and only called forth anger and bitter feelings from Evert. Thus she soon perceived that so long as any of

her property remained, nothing would be able to check him in his extravagance and love of display. The aim of his life was still to be foremost in society, and until all sources of help were exhausted, nothing in the world could restrain him from continuing as he had begun. Often when Ellen sat alone with her child, she thanked her mother in her heart for so arranging it that this child at least should never be impoverished through her husband's folly; but she had not yet thought that she would perhaps one day be forced to choose between her husband's honor and her child's future. She did not consider it possible that it could come to that.

Time had thus elapsed, and the greater part of the winter was over. Uno had often been at Ochard's, but only when there was a reception. His behavior towards Ellen evinced true respect; but he never approached her for a private conversation. He carefully avoided everything which reminded of the former friendly intimacy.

One morning in March while Ellen was playing with her little boy, Baroness Ernstein came in. Augusta looked disturbed.

"My dear Ellen," said she, "I desire to speak a few words to you in confidence."

Ellen rang, and Ingrid assumed the charge of the boy. When Augusta and Ellen were alone, the Baroness said, —

"Have you seen your husband today?"

"Yes, but only for a moment. He has had so many calls this morning and was obliged to go to the Treasurer so early, that we only spoke a few hasty words to each other. But why do you ask me this question?"

"You shall hear directly. I suppose you know where he was yesterday?"

"At a dinner which your husband had given in honor of the Englishman, Lord H——."

"Precisely. When the dinner was over, some of the gentlemen concluded to go to Djurgården. There they played cards. Captain U—— had desperately bad luck, while your husband's was brilliant. When U—— had played away all the money which he had with him, he put up his remarkably fine riding horse. Ochard won that also, and the game was then ended. U——, embittered by his reverses, wished to be revenged on your husband, and said to Lord H——, —

"'You have not taken part in the game, and yet I know that you are a lucky player.'

"'It is just my constant luck that takes away the pleasure of playing,' replied his Lordship. 'It is so monotonous to win continually.'

"'So you always have good luck, my Lord?' asked Evert.

"'Yes, so invariably, that I scarcely think I can lose.'

"'But it might happen that Fortune one day might turn her back on you. She is capricious,' said Evert.

"'Possibly, but I doubt if she will gladden me with a proof of her capriciousness.'

"'And besides,' joined in U——, 'no person with a limited fortune ought to engage in a contest with Lord H——, who can afford to lose as large a sum as your whole fortune, my dear Ochard.'

"'I do not dispute it; but it would still be interesting to see if my Lord's luck holds this evening.'

"'This evening, like all others,' replied the Lord, with irritated assurance.

"'You are not rich enough, dear Ochard, to risk the experiment,' said U——.

"'I am at least rich enough to venture to tempt fortune this evening, without needing to put my horses at stake,' replied Ochard, presumptuously.

"'If you are determined to be ruined, my dear sir,' said the Englishman, 'it is not my fault; I have warned you.'

"But Ochard's vanity, wounded by U——'s words and Lord H——'s assurance, hindered him from listening to the warnings of the others. With an expression of reliance he said, —

"'I am not so easily ruined, my Lord.'

"Then the game began. At first luck seemed actually to have abandoned the Englishman, and Ochard triumphed, while those around him praised his lucky star, which never failed him; but during the third game the luck turned, and after that remained steadily on the Englishman's side.

"'My dear sir, the stake is too high, we will make it lower. It is my unfelicitous luck which I would show you, but I do not care to win your money.'

"'And I, my Lord, can very well bear the loss which this or even a higher stake might involve.'

"In short, when they had finished playing, your husband, who is not generally a gambler, had, out of sheer vanity, lost an unheard-of sum. He had played on his word of honor, and the debt must be liquidated to-morrow, when Lord H—— is invited here to dinner, together with my husband and several of the *corps diplomatique*. I, who know from Rubens how large a fortune you brought him, and have also learned through experience what it costs to live as you do, was almost beside myself with fright at this intelligence. I foresaw that he would probably not be able to pay his gambling debt without a sensible loss for the time, and therefore I beg you to turn to me if it should be necessary. It is quite likely that Evert cannot command so large an amount without being compelled to procure it in a way that would place him in the hands of the usurers."

"How large is this amount?" asked Ellen, in a trembling voice.

"I know not how many thousand riks thalers."

"Thanks, Augusta, for your sympathy and friendship! But however large this sum may be, Evert will certainly be able to pay it, without being obliged to borrow."

"Are you perfectly sure of that?"

"Perfectly."

"My dear Ellen, a hundred thousand thalers is certainly a large sum; but when one lives at the rate of at least twelve thousand a year, has an establishment which costs more than twenty thousand, and before his marriage had a debt of perhaps twenty thousand, then, my friend, it is probable that there is not much remaining after eight years' marriage."

"Notwithstanding this, Augusta, I assure you that Evert will not need to borrow, in order to pay his gambling debt."

"I know you have a capital which he cannot come at. But consider, you are both young, and you have a child, whom you must not deprive of these means, which will one day be all you possess. You see, Ellen, I speak as a friend who thoroughly knows the truth, and not like the multitude who assert that your fortune is three times as large as it is, — something which Evert has tried to make every one believe. But to none but you have I said what I thought and intended in this matter."

"Thanks, thanks, you dear, good woman! But believe me, I rely so fully upon you and your friendship, that if I should one day need the help of others, you would be the only one to whom I would apply."

In a little while Augusta left. Ellen walked to and fro for a few moments, as if undecided about what she ought to do. Finally she went in to her child, and after pressing him to her heart a moment with a warm prayer, she dressed herself and went out.

On the evening of the same day, after the married couple had retired, without Evert's mentioning a word of what had

occurred, simply informing his wife that Lord H—— and several friends were to dine with him the next day, Ellen was awakened by her husband's getting up very carefully. While pretending to be asleep she saw him take her keys and open her bureau very cautiously, pulling out the drawer in which she was accustomed to keep her jewels. But when he found the drawer empty, he made a gesture of surprise and anger, and then opened all the other drawers with great impatience, but only found some less valuable trinkets. All the rest were gone.

"What does this mean?" muttered Evert, pale as death, and locked the bureau again.

Any one who had seen the look of anguish, of horror and grief, which Ellen fastened on her husband, could have divined what she at that moment suffered. But when Evert returned to bed she closed her eyes and feigned slumber, while she thought, —

"I will spare him the humiliation of knowing that I have seen his act. O God, sustain my courage!"

During the remainder of the night the words of the jeweler, whom she had asked to exchange her jewels for false ones, resounded in her ears: "The Assessor has already spoken with me about this."

The next morning after breakfast, Evert said, —

"Listen, Ellen; I would like to have the jeweller alter your ornaments and make the setting a little more modern. Can I see them?"

"No, my dear, you cannot, for I left them there yesterday in the same design which you had in view."

"That is singular! But I must declare that I do not at all like such independent actions. I require you to consult with me, and not to take such measures without my consent. To what jeweller have you taken them?"

"To Herr H——." Ellen went to him with a sad, almost suffering expression in her eyes, saying: "Leave this trifling matter, Evert, and let me attend to the affair myself; for I have something more important to speak to you about. I wish to give you this money. A certain *feeling* tells me that you need it." She handed her husband a roll of bills. "But mark well! this is the only, the last means which I have a right to dispose of."

"Ellen, from whence have you obtained this money?" exclaimed Evert, very red in the face; "and how do you know that I need it?"

"Let both remain my secret, and rest assured that I shall endeavor to forget all that concerns this matter, if you will only out of love for me make the sacrifice not to gamble any more."

"Ellen, I am no gambler."

"No, I am aware of it, but from a false ambition you allow yourself to be tempted to play."

"You season your gift with moralizing," rejoined Evert in an offended tone.

"Moralizing? no, Evert, but with advice, a warning from the best friend you possess, and it ought not to wound you. Who is better entitled to give you friendly advice than your wife; she who is to share with you all sorrows and joys? Ah, Evert! believe me, no one can wish to spare you every humiliation more than I; but do not regard the words which my duty and my reason dictate as blame or the desire to preach to you. What I say has its ground in so sincere an affection, that it ought not to be misunderstood."

The dinner was over; a part of the gentlemen had taken their leave to return to Ochard's in the evening. Uno, who was also there to dinner, had remained with several others. The first of the guests for the evening who arrived was Baroness Ernstein.

Uno approached her and said in a low voice, —

"Well?"

"You wish to know how the embassy resulted. Just as I had supposed. Not a word of disapproval passed Ellen's lips; she declared that she would make it all right and refused to accept my aid."

"She has kept her word. Ochard has in our presence paid Lord H——. Can she have gone so far in her pride as to cancel her settlement and deprive her child of his patrimony?"

"I do not think so," answered the Baroness; "she loves her child too deeply for that; but she has made a different kind of a sacrifice."

"What sacrifice?"

"That which I predicted."

"Sold her jewels?"

"Precisely. When you informed me of Evert's pecuniary condition, and told me that he could not possibly pay his gambling debt without applying to a usurer, at the same time desiring me to offer my services, I said to you, 'Ellen will sooner sell her jewels than solicit the assistance of others.' I know her too well not to be aware of how sensitive she is where her husband is concerned."

"But how do you know that she sold her jewels?"

"When I left her, I went to the jeweller's to give an order. When I stepped into my carriage, Ellen's stopped before the store. I guessed her errand immediately, and after making a few calls I returned to the jeweller's. There lay three étuis. I opened one of them and recognized Ellen's jewels. And now I have as a true spy rendered my accounts."

At that moment Ellen came towards them, saying, —

"What is being discussed here? I have had such a hard contest to sustain with several of the ladies, that I wish you, Augusta, could have been there to help me."

"And what was the strife about?"

"Men and women's unequal rights."

"Well, how did the battle end?" asked Uno, smiling.

"Ah! I came very near losing it; for the two ladies fell upon me with so many rights of our sex, that I found myself compelled to take up the cause of the assailed," replied Ellen.

"You defended man!" exclaimed the Baroness. "My friend, you may be glad that I was not there, for you would then have had one adversary more. I have made a resolution from which I never swerve, always to attack the so-called stronger sex."

Again a time elapsed. Evert informed his wife that he had obtained the office he had striven for, and that he intended to celebrate his promotion now as in former times, with a grand ball.

"Evert, ought we to give any large party now? Can we do it?"

"See here, Ellen, hereafter it is my income which is used, and I beg to be excused from all interference on your part in matters with which you have nothing to do."

Ellen was silent. A ball was arranged with such magnificence, that Ellen could have wept. Flowers were ordered from the hot-houses for the whole dancing-hall, so that the room should have the appearance of a garden. No means were spared to make the entertainment brilliant and sumptuous.

The guests were lavish in their praise, and lauded Evert as a man who knew how to use his wealth in a manner that spread enjoyment and delight around him. But if one could have thrown a glance into Ellen's heart and seen how unhappy she felt at this magnificence, which, as she suspected, cost them the last of their remaining fortune,

how he would have pitied this much-envied woman!

One evening a week after the festivity, when Ellen's little boy had gone to sleep and she sat alone with her sewing, the door opened hastily and Evert entered. He was very pale.

"I wish to speak with you, Ellen," said he.

She went out with him into the cabinet.

"Do you recollect that you once said with regard to the settlement which your mother made, that everything you possessed was mine also?"

"Very well, Evert, and you can find the proof of it in my wishing you to draw the interest."

"But what do you suppose a man can do with two thousand five hundred thalers a year? It is barely enough for a simple clerk's family to live on, much less a man in my position."

"Your own income is now so large that, joined to this interest and the remainder of our fortune, it ought to enable us to live an untroubled life."

"Possibly for one who can limit himself and has no debts; but you see, I neither can nor will change our manner of life. By so doing I should cease to be the leader of the *ton*, the one around whom all gather to render him their homage and admiration. Do you not understand how abhorrent it would be for a wealthy and courted man, the object of the attention of persons in high places, to step down to the level of a ruined man, which I actually am? To be obliged, after such a life as ours, to make retrenchments and live like an ordinary office-holder who toils for his living? No, this shabby style I am not created for. Rather than survive such an humiliation, I would shoot myself. But so desperate a step is not necessary. With a single stroke of the pen you can cancel that deed, for it is stated in your mother's contract that, if you should consider it your duty to annul it, you have the right to do so."

"Yes, so it stands," answered Ellen with mild earnestness; "but there is a clause qualifying this permission, which runs thus: 'But if my daughter Ellen has children in her marriage, then I advise her to reflect well before she sets aside the disposition I have made, so that she may only in a case of the greatest necessity infringe my desire, which is, for her to leave this property to her children undiminished.'"

"Well, that really does not hinder you from annulling the contract, so much I can understand. If you love me truly and sincerely, you will not hesitate for a moment. Love sacrifices everything."

"But true affection first considers whether the gift benefits or injures. 'Only in a case of the greatest necessity,' says my mother's will; and I revere her too much not to regard her wish as sacred. Evert, believe me, were it to save your honor, I would hesitate as little now as when I gave you the sum which you needed to fulfil your word. But as it is, I should defraud my child, you, and myself of a security against need and trouble, only for the sake of continuing a foolish manner of life for a few years. No, Evert, I should be a poor mother, a poor wife, and a weak, pitiful woman, if I did not try to check you in the course upon which you have entered and which will lead to the ruin of us all."

"Ellen, you will then see me in despair over our downfall, force me to shoot myself!" exclaimed Evert with a gesture full of effect. He had always found Ellen submissive, and did not for a moment doubt that she would yield now. But he did not know the strength which this heart contained.

"No, not at all. And I cannot entertain so mean a thought of you, as that you would commit a crime so infamous

as to stain your wife and child with the blood of a suicide, rather than to sacrifice a little of the vain display with which you surround your life."

"You thus refuse to annul the contract?"

"Yes, Evert, for I should not do you a service by complying with your wish. In a few years we should again be in the same situation, and have nothing remaining for our child."

"Well, then, cold, selfish woman, you are likely to be forced; for I have a debt of thirty thousand thalers, and am absolutely obliged to redeem two or three notes in the space of a fortnight, besides paying for the new furniture in the dancing-hall. And the carriage-maker will not wait any longer. In a word, I must have money, otherwise I shall be miserable; and if you do not give it to me willingly, then I shall force you, for my honor is at stake." Evert went towards his wife with a threatening gesture.

Ellen had become unnaturally pale. She leaned against her writing-table, the drawers of which contained the deeds through which her child's future was secured. A moment's pause ensued. She sat down as if to consider her whole position. Finally she said in a voice so deeply serious that it acquired something solemn, —

"Take a seat, Evert, and let us examine our position with calmness. Then, when I have come to a clear understanding of it all, I will take my resolution." Not a word or even a look accused the foolish husband who had squandered so large a fortune.

Evert, who saw that if he wished to gain his object, he must reveal to his wife a part of the truth, accounted for all the debts of which he considered it necessary to inform her. Without a muscle moving in her face, she heard that all the property he had obtained with her was very nearly destroyed. Besides this, Oehard had a debt of thirty thousand thalers. With her head leaning on her hand Ellen repeated within herself, —

"Thus completely ruined! All that remains is only a part of what my mother destined for my children."

But of all the bitter and agonized thoughts which filled her breast, not a single one passed her lips. When her husband had finished, she stifled the sigh which tried to force its escape, and gave him her hand with an indescribably tender and sorrowful expression, —

"Thank you, Evert, for letting me know the truth and not concealing our actual situation from me."

"And you make over to me the right to draw the money mentioned in the contract?" exclaimed Evert, pressing her hand and carrying it to his lips.

"No. But I shall so arrange our affairs, that we can lead a life free from care on your income."

"Ellen!" shrieked Evert, and sprang up. "Do not drive me to any extreme," added he, laying his clenched hand on the table; "I might then feel the desire to destroy this deed myself, which deprives me of a property that ought to belong to me, and if I did so, I could defy you to assert that I had destroyed the paper. Will you now give me what I ask, or shall I take it?"

Ellen had also risen, and stood erect with a high head before her husband. She handed him a key and said with a formidable calmness, —

"I do not wish you to degrade yourself so far as to commit a theft; you have been on the point of doing it once before; then it concerned my jewels. Here is the key which clears your way to these papers, take them! But no power in the world shall then compel me to take part in this extravagant life. At the same moment that you appropriate this little fortune, which, small as it is, could yet have secured our future, I take my child in my arms and leave a hus-

band, who wilfully, with full consciousness and deliberation, would rather ruin his family than submit to a few retrenchments in his manner of life. This is now my firm decision." She laid the key before him on the table; but Evert pushed it hastily away and exclaimed in an agitated voice, while he buried his face in his hands, —

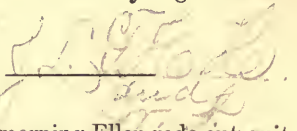
"Never would I have believed that you cherished so little love for me. Ah! it is fearful, in the hour of misfortune to be so treated by the one who ought to share and alleviate my troubles."

"Evert, Evert, I will share, mitigate, and put an end to your troubles," whispered Ellen; "but I will do it in such a way that we can be satisfied with it in the future. All, all, will I do for you, except to give you the opportunity to continue a life which would make you and your child miserable. Do not turn from me; believe my assurance, that I would without consideration, without a sigh, sacrifice myself for you; but your own heart will tell you in a calmer moment that I have no right to deprive my child of a secure future." She added with tenderness, "For what do I live, if not for you and my child? You constitute my whole world!"

It was impossible not to be moved by her voice, by her loving expression; therefore when Evert met her mild glance, so full of soul, he said, —

"Ellen, I will listen to you."

It would be unnecessary to relate here word for word what she said; but she expressed the hope that she should be able to help him out of his difficulty. She showed him the necessity of leading a very different life henceforth. With the warmth of conviction she represented to him that he had now arrived at the age when vanity ought to give way to a noble ambition; that his aim hereafter ought to be, not to shine with that which was in itself without value, but really to be of use. Evert listened with a clouded brow, but still he listened. To his objection, that he could not change his way of life without letting the world suspect the true cause of it, and that he could not possibly bear the humiliation, Ellen replied that there was a way of helping that matter. He should take a journey abroad during the summer months at the expense of the state. During the time she would pay his debts, but on the condition that he gave her full power to act in his place. They conversed far into the night: she, with tenderness and judgment; he, with the bitterness which the necessity of yielding and sacrificing that which he held dearest must unavoidably engender with such a man.



The next morning Ellen rode out quite early. She went to the merchant who had her money and drew a portion of the principal, with which Evert redeemed the notes that were due and paid the tradesmen. Still, Evert was far from satisfied with this measure, for he had only wished to redeem the notes, and to make a partial payment to the mechanics, reserving a little of the money to procure his vanity a few more delightful moments. But when Ellen remained inexorable on this point, he was obliged to comply, although with inward resentment.

In the beginning of May, Evert started on his journey abroad, after bidding his wife a cold farewell.

So Ellen was then left alone, with the promise which she had given her husband so to arrange everything that at his return he should have no debts and could continue to be regarded as a man of means. With an admirable strength of mind and a quick comprehension of what ought to be done, Ellen went to work.

Her first move was to set aside twenty

thousand thalers of the amount deposited with the merchant for her son, in such a way that this sum could not be touched. Then she sold the house with a gain of ten thousand thalers. With this addition to her means, Ellen looked forward to the future with hope and trust; for she had now paid all the debts of which Evert had told her, and still possessed a considerable surplus.

When with the assistance of the merchant she had in all silence put Evert's affairs in order, and had made an estimate of what remained and how it should be employed, she removed to her pretty little country place, Eksholm, where she one day received a letter from Evert's father, who was settled on a small estate some miles from the capital. The letter ran thus: —

"My beloved Child: However unwilling I am to trouble you, I can still not avoid telling you a few things about your husband, my son, which have occasioned me much sorrow. I do so, because it may have very unpleasant consequences for my daughters, and I desire you to make yourself acquainted with how matters stand. I was very ill last fall, as you know, and being unable to go to the capital myself to attend to my affairs, I was obliged to write to Evert and commission him to draw a sum of money which had been placed at interest, and which constituted his sisters' inheritance from their mother. He let me know a short time afterwards that he had taken the money, and bade me tell him where he should place it. I told him to loan it out to another firm on a first mortgage, and gave him full power to act in my place. Since then he has said in several letters that he had not yet found time to attend to the affair, and finally asked me if I would not allow him for the present to deposit it with the same merchant who had your money, until I could see to the matter myself. I replied that I was satisfied with that arrangement. The next letter which I received was from you, with the intelligence that Evert had gone abroad. I found it scarcely in accordance with civility and the respect to which I as a father was entitled, for him to go away without writing to me; it also seemed to me incomprehensible that he had not sent me any receipt for the money. In short, then wrote to the merchant in question, and obtained the answer that Evert had not placed his sisters' little patrimony with him. I have written to Evert, without receiving any answer. All this has led me to try to find out about his affairs, which I have succeeded in doing through my son-in-law, Captain L——.

"'L—— has probably visited you during his stay in Stockholm; but I had forbidden him to speak with you on business, for I wished first to know how things were with Evert.'

"L——, whose property is in the hands of a merchant who is Count Uno Kerner's *homme d'affaires*, was, on calling upon him, questioned about how Evert's affairs actually stood. When L—— requested to know the reason of this inquiry, the merchant replied, —

"'I only wish to hear if he is really wealthy, which I begin to doubt, as he has twice borrowed of Count Uno Kerner and stands in debt to him for ten thousand thalers.'

"All this, and much more, has excited my anxiety; and I now ask you, my daughter, how is it with my son? Has he destroyed the whole fortune which you brought him, and must I consider him a dishonest man?

"It would cruelly grieve me to be obliged to descend into my grave with the certainty that my only son is a man without honor, a vain and frivolous spendthrift, who, for the gratification of his miserable desire for display and pleasure, prepares ruin for all his family.

"If my health had permitted, I would

have come to you in person, to obtain a frank answer to these sad questions.

"Your affectionate father-in-law,

"EVERT OF OCHARD."

Ellen sat stunned by this new blow. She, who had thought with so much joy that her husband still possessed a little remnant of the property, she, who believed that he had spoken frankly when he gave an account of his debts, now saw a new list of them, and besides, — this was the worst of all, — the dishonesty towards his poor sisters, whom he had robbed of the little means they possessed, which the father, with full confidence in his son's honor and integrity, had entrusted to him.

She could not weep: her grief was too great to be relieved by tears. But she was not one of those who sit inactive and brood over the misfortunes which have befallen them. She always sought for a way of ameliorating the evil. When trial came upon her, she tried to bear it with a true Christian spirit. So was it now. After the first grief and consternation had abated, her only desire was to be able to cover her husband's fault, and to spare the old father sorrow on account of his son.

With this resolution she went in to town to endeavor to make all things right.

The next day she wrote to her stepfather: —

"MY DEAR FATHER: With deep grief I find myself to be a cause of misunderstanding between you and Evert. The state of the case is this: my husband, at his departure, requested me to send you the enclosed receipt for the money in question. The reason that this paper did not come to hand long ago is my neglect to send it. Be calm, dear father, in regard to Evert; he will certainly never occasion you any sorrow."

Ellen had now saved her husband from his father's anger and contempt; for he belonged to the old school, and was very strict in his ideas of honor. But she was considerably poorer in consequence, and the appearance of carelessness which fell upon her would diminish her father-in-law's respect.

After she had sent this letter, she commissioned the merchant to redeem the notes which Evert had given Uno Kerner; but she received the answer that the Count had taken the notes from his agent, saying that he wished to attend to the affair himself.

Ellen then wrote to Uno and asked him to call on her; but the Count was away, and she was obliged to return to Eksholm without being able to do anything further in the matter.

All that now remained of their fortune, besides the twenty thousand thalers which Ellen had reserved for her child, was eight thousand thalers.

One month after this Uno returned to the capital, when he immediately received a call from Ellen's agent, for the purpose of redeeming the notes; but Uno replied, that he wished to talk with Fru Ochard first, and accordingly that same afternoon he went to Eksholm.

It was a beautiful day in July, and Ellen was spending it out in the open air with her child.

The life which she led at Eksholm was very retired. Uno found her in the little park, to which Ingrid had shown him. After he had greeted Ellen with his former cordiality, he said, —

"Forgive me for coming and disturbing you! But I am obliged to speak with you on account of a visit which your agent made me in your behalf. I see very well that the commission did not come from Evert, as the notes are not due before five years. Evert told me at

his departure not to deliver the notes to any one but him, as he desired that you should remain in ignorance of this debt. How you obtained knowledge of it, I do not know, neither do I think that I have the right, after the promise I gave Evert, to let you pay this debt."

"But if I have obtained this charge from him, then you will certainly not oppose it?"

"If it were really Evert, who with his own means wished to clear himself from his debt to me, I would then have no right to make any objections. But if you take this debt upon you, with the sacrifice of your private fortune of your child's inheritance, then you ought to allow me to refuse."

"That with which I discharge Evert's debts will not deprive my child of his inheritance," answered Ellen with a slight color. "But even if it were so, I believe it is my duty as well as my son's, to make a sacrifice when it is done for the advantage of my husband and my child's father."

"But there is no necessity for paying this debt."

"Yes, it is a matter of honor; for my husband ought not to be your debtor."

"Ellen, Ellen, what is it you say?"

"The truth. This debt burns in my heart like a reproach of conscience. Not until it is paid shall I breathe freely."

"You feel humiliated because I was able to do your husband this little service, and yet I had believed that you cherished friendship for me. Ellen, you do not consider me a man of honor, if you are pained at my being so happy as to help Evert."

"Among all Evert's debts this to you was the only one from which I felt humiliated. Say nothing! Your own heart approves what I say, and let us not waste further words on the subject. The debt shall be paid; receive my thanks for assisting my husband so magnanimously."

Uno took her extended hand in silence.

"Ah! if you could imagine how happy I feel when I now know that Oehard has no longer any debts."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Perfectly."

"Without wishing to speak against your husband, I will only ask, do you believe that he will remain free from debt long?"

"I hope so."

"You hope! Ah! do you not know that the vain man, like the drunkard, thirsts for more, the more he enjoys. The vain person also resembles the gambler, with this difference, that the latter's stake is always money, while the gain of the former is never anything but empty flattery; still, like the gambler, he sacrifices all in the hope of winning."

"What you say is true; but Oehard is no longer such a gambler. He has won flattery enough, to be able to turn over a new leaf without regret, and become ambitious."

"Ambitious? He has not yet reached the point where he will be able to renounce the moment's applause for a future glory. A more bitter experience in the school of life is required for that."

"No, all that is needed is for him to love me and his child; and he does," added Ellen mildly; but a sad foreboding filled her heart of something very painful which yet remained for her.

Ingrid now came and announced a Herr Jonathan from Hamburg, who had just at that moment arrived and asked to see her Grace.

Ellen and Uno went up to the house. In the little saloon they found a middle-aged man, whose face showed that he was a Jew.

Herr Jonathan bowed politely as they entered.

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, madam, but the Assessor gave me permission to call upon his wife."

"Did you meet my husband in Hamburg?"

"We met in Stockholm, shortly before his departure from Sweden, which you are well aware of, I hope." Herr Jonathan again bowed.

"No, sir, this is the first time I have heard your name. If you have any message from my husband, then be so good as to communicate it to me."

"Is it the first time that you hear my name?" said Herr Jonathan, surprised. "Try to remember if you have not heard it before, if your husband has not mentioned it?"

"I assure you that I have never heard him speak of you."

"What does that mean?" exclaimed the Jew; "and yet I have your security to pay me in the space of two months the sum which I advanced to the Assessor at his departure. If you, madam, did not sign your name yourself, then it is forged." Herr Jonathan drew out a paper and showed Ellen the signature.

Ellen became so unnaturally pale, that Uno rose involuntarily, for he feared that she would faint. But she was not one of those who are ready to swoon on every occasion; she did not have weak nerves, consequently she soon recovered herself and said, —

"It is very true that I wrote this security, but I had entirely forgotten the name of the person to whom it was made out."

"Perhaps the amount also," returned Herr Jonathan with a mien which drove the blood to Ellen's cheeks. With a gesture full of dignity she rose and said, —

"Be so kind as to name the amount of the debt, and you shall receive the payment. This, sir, is all that you need to know."

"Five thousand riks thalers, besides the interest."

Ellen went to her writing-table and wrote an order upon the merchant, with whom she still had eight thousand riks thalers, all that remained of her fortune.

"There it is, sir, and you may give Merchant D—— my husband's note as a quittance."

At the same moment Ellen handed Jonathan the order, an old man stepped between them.

"Wait a little, sir," said the old gentleman. "Be so good as to show me my son's note of hand with my daughter-in-law's signature."

"You here, my father!" exclaimed Ellen, with an expression of anguish. "It is unnecessary for you to see the note," added she beseechingly. "The debt is paid, and —"

"I will see it," said the old man hastily. "Herr Jonathan I am 'medical councillor' of Ochard and the father of the Assessor. You ought to consider that I have some right to be obeyed in this house."

Herr Jonathan handed the note to the old gentleman, who looked at the signature a moment and then said with a forced smile, —

"I thank you, sir; all is as I supposed."

Jonathan bowed and left the room.

A few moments dreary silence ensued, during which the old man regarded Ellen with an expression of both grief and severity. She stood before him with downcast eyes, and the paleness of death on her brow. Finally he seized her arm as he said, —

"I have a few words to say to you in private, follow me in to your child."

Ellen looked at her father-in-law with an expression full of anguish, as if she had wished to pray for mercy; but the old man seemed to be insensible to it, and they both left the room.

Uno had kept at a distance, in order not to increase the bitterness of their grief by reminding them that he was present.

When Ellen and her father-in-law had

entered the cabinet, he closed the door behind them, and without saying a word went to Ingrid, who sat by the window playing with little Elon, took the boy in his arms, and made a gesture of dismissal to Ingrid, who immediately left the room.

When the door closed after her, he said in a serious voice, —

"You did not sign your name to the note. It was not your handwriting." The old man's eyes were fastened sharply on Ellen, who at these words trembled like a criminal. With a violent effort she answered, —

"Oehard wrote it with my permission."

"You lie, unfortunate woman," shrieked the old man, pale with anger; "you wish, in your blind affection, to free him by falsehood; but one cannot deceive me so easily. Lay your hand on your child's head and say that he wrote your name with your permission."

Ellen remained motionless.

"You cannot answer. I knew it well enough, unhappy man that I am! My only son, whom I loved so deeply, is then a spendthrift, an impostor, a forger!" He covered his face with his hands and threw himself down on the sofa.

"O my father," exclaimed Ellen, falling on her knees, "do not speak so! Is not all that I possess my husband's also? One cannot call him a forger, if he uses his wife's name. No, no, I had told him that what was mine was also his. O, you must not be angry or accuse him! He is inconsiderate, that is all."

"Hush, do not try to excuse him; for I know all, *all* understand. I know that it is you who paid back the money he dissipated for his sisters, that he has ruined you, that he is a contemptible fool, who sacrifices everything to his vanity. O, that I should be obliged to live to our —"

"Hold!" exclaimed Ellen terrified.

"You must not be angry," said little Elon, going to the old man; "for mamma has said that God does not like those who are angry and naughty."

This tender, weak, innocent child's voice, which raised itself in the midst of the tumult of violent feelings and uttered God's name, had a singular effect on the old father. He again buried his face in his hands, but he now sobbed like a child; Ellen wept too, wept bitterly, with her head leaning against his shoulder. Suddenly both felt a pair of little childish hands patting them, and Elon said, —

"Do not cry, do not cry!" Ellen raised her tear-drenched face, smiled at the child, and placed him on the old man's knee, saying, —

"Ask grandpa not to be angry with papa!"

Elon twined his arms around his neck and said, —

"Dear grandpa, you must not be angry with papa!"

Oehard took his hands from his face and looked at the child a moment through his tears, then pressed a kiss on his brow as he said, —

"Your prayer is heard. God bless and preserve you, child!" Then he turned to Ellen and added in an unsteady voice, "God reward you, my daughter!"

He put Elon down and said to Ellen, —

"Now leave me alone awhile, my child."

Ellen understood that he needed to be alone in order to calm his perturbed mind; therefore, without saying a word, she carried his hand to her lips, and, taking her son with her, left the room.

As she left the cabinet she tried to give her face a calmer expression; but her feelings were too violently agitated for her to be able at once to efface from her features the grief which filled her soul. With a fruitless effort to smile she advanced to Uno, who still remained standing at the same window in the saloon.

"Pardon me, Uno, for forgetting all politeness to my guest," said she; "but I was obliged to accompany my father-in-law, to explain my great thoughtlessness in not remembering my obligation, thus exposing my husband's honor, not only in the eyes of that man, but also before Evert's father and —"

"Hush, Ellen, why this excuse! Do you then think that I do not know the paltry character of this man whom you defend and for whom you sacrifice yourself? Yes, Ellen, I know him thoroughly, and it is time that you did also, before he leads you to an abyss which will ingulf you all. No sacrifice on your part will touch him. So long as you possess anything to offer, he will force you to do everything to gratify his vanity and extravagance. Ah then, Ellen, realize at once that you must leave him to his fate, if you wish to save anything for your child."

"Never shall I abandon him; never so long as I am able will I withdraw from him the help and the deliverance which he has a right to demand of me."

"And your child?"

"God will protect him, if I do my duty; but poorly should I fulfil it if his father was left a victim to disgrace." Ellen bent down and wept.

"O Ellen, your tears burn my soul; and this man, without honor, without heart, has dared to draw them forth!"

Uno approached Ellen and took one of her hands, adding, —

"I would give a year of my life to be able to dry them."

"Uno," said she, raising her head, "have respect for my grief and speak no more about it."

Ingrid entered hastily and said, with fright depicted in her countenance, "Herr Ochard lies senseless there in the cabinet." Scarcely were the words passed her lips before Ellen was at the old man's side. Uno threw himself on his horse and rode to town after a physician.

Evert's father had a stroke of paralysis, but regained consciousness a few hours after the physician arrived. His first clear thought was to request to speak with Count Uno Kerner.

Uno, who had returned with the doctor, went immediately to the sick man, who spoke with great difficulty. When Uno stood by his bed, he made a sign to Ellen and the doctor to leave the room. Uno bent down over him as soon as they were alone, and the old man murmured, in a scarcely audible voice, —

"Send — the letter — to — my son. — I — wrote it — when — I fell sick. — Add to it — that — I — died — without — cursing him. — Ellen prayed. — The letter — lies — in the — other room — on the table. — Promise —"

"I promise sacredly to fulfil your wish," said Uno, pressing his hand.

"Thanks!"

A few moments afterwards he again lost the power of speech.

With a daughter's tenderness and love, Ellen watched by his sick-bed. She did not leave him a moment, and the grateful look which he fixed upon her said more than words. On the fifth day, Ellen, with deep sorrow in her heart, knelt by her father-in-law's death-bed, this father who had died of grief over his son's bad deeds. Poor Ellen felt this with deep pain, and his loss became still more bitter at this consciousness. How warm and fervent was the prayer which she sent up as she knelt by the side of the departed! She remained there still when Ingrid opened the door and approached her.

"Little Elon does not feel very well," said the girl in a trembling voice. Ellen started up.

In a few moments she again sat by a sick-bed, and this time it was her child's. Overwhelmed with grief and despair, she listened to her child's short breath and felt his hot brow.

"Elon's head aches," stammered the

boy, and reached his arms to his mother. An hour later the doctor came. The boy had the scarlet fever.

What a period of fearful anguish for poor Ellen! It seemed to her that she could have borne all patiently, that she could have submitted to anything, if she had only been allowed to keep her child. But while she prayed to God so fervently not to take her darling from her, she bowed her heart humbly before the Divine will, and thought, "*Father, not my will, but thine be done*"; and the Supreme Being took little Elon from this life and folded him in his fatherly arms.

The senior Ochard was not yet buried when his grandson's child-soul took wings and ascended to its true home.

Completely crushed by sorrow, the mother clasped the little cold corpse to her heart, as if to warm and revive it with her kisses and caresses. No tears came to relieve the most boundless of all grief, — that of a mother who loves her child.

Without a sound Ellen rose when they told her that she must part with her child's lifeless form. She kissed it once more on the pale brow, and whispered with clasped hands, —

"The Lord gave and the Lord takes. His will be done!"

In the evening Uno wrote the following letter to Evert: —

"My dear Ochard: I ought to have sent you the enclosed letter from your father a week ago, according to the charge he gave me on his death-bed. He was struck with paralysis while writing it, so terribly was he affected by the consciousness that his son had not only sacrificed his whole life and fortune, and his wife and child's future, but, what is worst of all, his honor and his conscience, all to satisfy the paltry claims of a miserable vanity. You have through this been the cause of your father's death; but this is not all. You have no longer a child, and will probably lose your wife also, who, prostrated by sorrow and grief, lies dangerously ill. If there is a spark of honor and manliness yet left in you, stop in your wretched career, and do not continue a life which has been the cause of so much sorrow and cost such immense sacrifices. You could have been your father's pride, your wife's happiness, if you had not, in your heedless desire for the flattery of fools, sacrificed everything that an upright man considers sacred. See to it that you preserve the words of your departed father in your heart, and take care not to forget how much your frivolity has cost your wife; for then I might feel the desire to remind you of it more forcibly.

"Uno Kerner."

ONE YEAR LATER.

The September sun shone mildly over the Löda estate On a slope in the park lay a young woman, with her dreamy and melancholy gaze fixed upon the fast-retreating clouds. A deep submission could be read in the pale features, and one saw that she had ceased to hope anything from this world. Her look expressed a thoughtfulness which showed plainly that her sorrow had led her to deep and serious reflections upon life. We scarcely need to say that this woman was Ellen. A little over a year had elapsed since she lost her child. She was spending the summer at Löda with the Kerners, while Count Rubens remained abroad with his newly married daughter.

Evert had not yet returned from his

foreign journey, as he had fallen ill at the intelligence of the death of his father and child, and after his recovery had been compelled to go to Italy in order completely to restore his weak health.

Ellen was so absorbed in the contemplation of the sky, that she did not hear the sound of steps which approached. She started when a sonorous manly voice said, —

"Ellen, I bring a letter with me, therefore I have sought you."

She turned toward the one who addressed her.

"Ah! Uncle Oscar, how good you are! From Evert, is it not?"

"Yes, it is." Count Oscar Kerner threw himself down in the grass at a little distance from Ellen, and handed her the letter. He continued: "To be frank, that was not the reason why I sought you, but in order to say to you some friendly words."

"You have always been such a good friend to me, Uncle." She gave him her hand.

"It seems to me that you abandon yourself to your sorrow too much. You allow it to govern you exclusively, and that is not right in a Christian, who ought to bow beneath trial with patience and submission. You are still young, and have much to live for."

"Not much, Uncle; but I ought to live, because it is God's will, and I shall hereafter, as hitherto, bear my loss without repining or complaint, fully convinced that if God had considered me worthy to keep my child, he would have allowed it to live. I bend beneath his will."

"Yes, you bend, but without endeavoring to raise yourself again."

"For that I lack strength." A tear ran down her cheek.

"It will not be so, if you consider how many duties you have as a wife yet unfulfilled."

"I shall try to perform them. If I cannot, it will not be from lack of will, but of power."

"You have entered upon a wrong road. You are humble; but an inactive humility is not right. Take a look at your present position. You have a husband, weak, vain, and foolish, it is true; but if you continue with this indifference to conform to his will, he will forget the impression which the loss of his father and child made upon him, and at his return here again will begin that extravagant manner of life, the result of which has been that out of your whole fortune you only retain the little remnant which was saved through your prudence and resolution. No, you have an aim, a beautiful, a glorious aim, which you ought to strive with full soul-strength to attain, and that is, to endeavor so to guide your husband that he may aspire towards a nobler satisfaction for his vanity than the one which he has hitherto sought."

"So did I once think; but I was mistaken. All my efforts continued without effect upon him. I no longer entertain any hope of being able to save him. Ah! I was so happy as long as I hoped, but when —"

"But the occurrence with the note shook your faith?"

Ellen started and looked at him.

"Who has mentioned that?"

"The one who was witness to the scene between you and Jonathan."

"Uno!"

"But he has not spoken of it to any one except me. Necessity forced him to it, when your illness made it indispensable for some one to take charge of your affairs. I did it, as you know, under the full conviction that you wished it all to be done without notice, and without exciting Emy's anxiety. In order that I should be able to accomplish this, and to give me a plain idea of your situation, Uno told me what he knew. Well, then, now be the one, in spite of all Ochard's faults, to enlighten him with your clear

understanding in regard to the way which he ought to choose, when, erelong, he returns and is again surrounded by flatterers who mislead his judgment. The letter which his father wrote, and the news of your illness and the death of his child, seem to have had an effect upon him, for since his sickness he has lived both a retired and economical life. Your future depends upon the influence which you can acquire over him on his return. Do not let an unreasonable sorrow make you forget your duty."

Ellen had listened to the Count's words with a thoughtful aspect. When he finished, she gave him her hand and said, —

"I shall imprint your words deep in my memory, and try to suit my conduct to them. Would to God that I could once more hope!"

"We can always hope, and ought to do so."

"Yes, in God; but not depend upon ourselves."

"If you hope with full trust in God, you will also find courage and strength to fulfil the charge which he has laid upon you."

"I will endeavor to do this."

"Good, then I am content. I will now leave you, that you may read your husband's letter undisturbed."

In the afternoon of the same day Ellen and Uno, who was also spending the summer at Löda, sat out on the terrace. Ellen's face was calmer and less sad than usual.

"How changed everything is in the space of a few years," said Uno. "I remember so clearly our first visit here, and especially one afternoon when we sat together on this very terrace. You then made a hard accusation against me. Nine years have elapsed since then, and both you and I have obtained an entirely different view of life. The only unchangeable things in this world are our feelings."

"I even doubt their steadfastness," said Ellen. "They shift and change color with an ease which troubles me."

"Not the deep and real feelings, only the false."

"And which are the real?"

"A mother's love for her child never changes, neither does the feeling of love and admiration which a high-minded and noble woman inspires."

"The same woman who appears to one high-minded is in the eyes of another weak. The only thing stable in life is instability."

"So you do not believe in the stability of love?"

"Yes, if it is real. But we so often take the enthusiasm of the moment for love. We confound the false and the true so easily."

"Yes, we certainly confound the false with the true very often. But why? Because we allow ourselves to be bound and governed by prejudices. So, for example, you consider it your duty to dismiss every feeling which might warm and cheer your heart, by reserving your attachment exclusively for your husband."

"And this is no false conception of my duty."

"But false in its basis, because the whole power of your will is not able to exclude the need of love from your heart."

"My heart needs no other object than the mate whom I have chosen of free will."

"We do not love the one whom we do not respect, and you cannot do otherwise than despise your husband."

"Uno!" Ellen looked at him sternly, while his gaze rested on her with a passionate expression.

"Ellen, you must hear the truth. I have neither will nor desire to keep it

longer to myself, and why should I? I love you warmly and eternally; I have loved you ever since I first saw you. My reverence for you has held back every declaration, and when such words once slipped over my lips, your will was sufficient to send me from you. My love was too strong, however, and I returned to breathe the same air that you breathe, to live at least in the moment when I saw you. Ah! Ellen, Ellen, how have I suffered; and what is my reward? Shall then this man, without honor and feeling, also deprive me of the only felicity which can be mine, that of knowing that your heart has a spark of the love which is at once my torment and my bliss? Be true for once, express what your heart conceals; I will then remain still, and never shall a word of my feelings pass my lips. Happy in the consciousness of being loved by you, I shall feel content with only being allowed to tarry in your vicinity, because I shall then know that our hearts beat with the same feeling. Whom would it really offend? Say, Ellen, could even the angels frown upon it?"

"God would," said Ellen slowly, and leaned back against the seat.

"Do not name God!" exclaimed Uno passionately; "love, the pure, the true, cannot excite his anger. Why continually shun the truth? I know that you love me; why then not have courage to confess it?"

"Very well, Uno, I shall have the cruel courage to utter the truth before you. You desire it, may you have it as you wish. You ask me, the married woman, to acknowledge a love for you, which if it existed would be my disgrace. You command me to taste the forbidden fruit, and yet you said just now, 'We cannot love the one whom we do not respect,' and you wish me to make myself contemptible. Go; Uno, I do not believe in your love; for had it been pure and strong, from respect to me you would never have demanded that I should degrade myself out of weakness for you." She rose and left him, without his trying to hinder her.

The next day Count Oscar proposed that they should all ride to Holmvik, as Count Rubens had that day returned from his journey abroad. The proposal was accepted, and directly after dinner the little cavalcade was in motion. The Count and Countess rode first, Ellen and Uno following. Alma and her betrothed had ridden over to Holmvik in the morning. Sappho, who loved a fast ride, gave her horse free rein, so that she and Oscar were soon far ahead of Ellen and Uno. As they entered the woods, a dog in pursuit of a hare came running out, and crossed the road right before their horses. Frightened by this, Ellen's horse reared, and Uno's made such a sudden spring to the side, that the Count, who was entirely unprepared for this motion, was thrown from the saddle. The horse, freed from his burden, dashed on, leaving his rider senseless on the ground. With one bound Ellen was at his side. She called to Sappho and Oscar as loud as she could, but they did not hear her. Kneeling by the fainting man, with his head pressed against her heart, she tried to recall him to consciousness by rubbing his temples. At last a sigh heaved his breast, and he opened his eyes.

"Uno, speak, say a word, a single word, that you are not hurt," said Ellen, in a voice full of anguish.

He closed his eyes as if some violent pain had forced him to do it.

"Uno, my beloved," faltered Ellen, as he remained motionless. These words, uttered in a tone of grief and despair, seemed to exert a magic influence upon him; for he looked up immediately with a glance which made her tremble.

"How are you?" whispered she.

"Well. O, that I might now die; you would then not have time to take back your words."

"I shall not take them back," replied she, while a flood of tears washed her cheeks when she saw him become still paler.

Oscar and Sappho now reached the spot. The loose horse had run past them and made them turn back.

Uno had struck his head in falling and sprained his arm, so that he was obliged to go back to Löda.

A week after this event Ellen entered the saloon, where Uno sat with his arm in a sling. The Kerners had gone to pay a visit.

"Why, Ellen!" He reached her his well hand. "I thought that you were away with the others."

"No, Uno, I stayed at home, because an explanation must take place between us."

"You come to take back the words which your fright drew forth; is it not so?"

"I never take back any words which go over my lips. If the truth has, against my will, forced its way from the depth of my heart, I will never contradict it."

"O, say that once more! Say that you love me! Let me again hear these words, which contain all that life has for me of felicity," exclaimed Uno with transport, and covered her hand with kisses. But she drew it away with a gesture full of noble dignity.

"Yes, I love you as I ought never to love any one but my husband," said she with deep seriousness. As Uno made a movement to take her hand again, she raised it with a warding-off gesture, and continued: "Hear me, and be still. I am not one of those women, who in a forbidden love seek a recompense for the self-deception which blinded them. No, the acknowledgment that I love you involves an eternal separation."

"Never, never shall I part with you. No, I will follow you like your shadow, as silent and faithful."

"And make my life a curse to me. No; you would then no longer be dangerous to my heart, for I should consider you a pitiful slave to a selfish passion. You would no longer be the man of honor whom I esteemed, if you pursued a woman who, in an unguarded moment, had let you perceive the feeling which she regarded as a crime. Listen to what I now have to say to you: in my heart I have betrayed the faith which I owed my husband. Do not make me more unhappy than I already am in the consciousness of my guilt by staying near me and constantly reminding me that there is one person who can think, This woman is in heart a faithless wife. Be magnanimous, and put a distance between us sufficiently great for me to be able to struggle with and conquer a weakness which I shall regret until my death."

"And if I lack strength for this?" said Uno in a smothered voice. "O Ellen, ask anything else, but grant me at least the happiness of seeing you!"

"No. This secret consciousness on each side would contain such a cruel disgrace for the man whose wife I am, that I myself shall have the courage which you lack, and raise an insurmountable wall between us. On my knees at his feet I will confess my fault, and then fly far hence."

"Well then, I will go back to Spain. O, may God make you as happy as you deserve!"

"And I desire," added an agitated voice behind them. Uno sprang up and Ellen turned round. Evert stood before them, with a pale and disordered aspect. When Ellen saw her husband, she reached both hands to him with an expression of so much mild humility, that it drew tears from Uno's and Evert's eyes. The

latter sprang forward and clasped her to his breast, stammering, —

"Forgive the cause of all that you have suffered! of all that has happened! I know that I alone am guilty."

"How easy to forgive, when we need forgiveness ourselves!" whispered Ellen, weeping, with her head leaning against her husband's breast.

In the space of a few days Ellen and Evert sat in their abode in Stockholm.

"Ah! Ellen, with what a chain of sorrows have I not weighed you down; how have I not embittered your life, and through my weakness estranged your heart from me, destroyed your property, and yet felt incensed against you for trying to check me."

"All is forgotten and atoned for if you only love me sufficiently not to allow yourself to be tempted to neglect me for the world's pleasures and flattery. We are still young, happiness may yet bloom for us."

"You good, incomparable wife!" said Evert, and kissed her hand. But Ellen saw that there was a constraint in his very heartiness, a certain fear, the origin of which she with her natural fine feeling divined. She took one of his hands and folded it in both hers, saying with indescribable gentleness, —

"Evert, I read your heart and find that you do not rightly know how we are to regulate our life henceforth. You fear that I wish to lay down laws for you, but you are mistaken. I have cancelled our marriage settlement, for I saw that this division of property is a cause of dissension and occasions much evil."

"Ellen, what magnanimity, after all that has occurred!"

"After all that has transpired I hope that you will not resume a manner of life which has been the source of so much sorrow for us both."

"But my present position does not allow me to — to — lead a retired life."

"Neither do I require it; but there is a great difference between living in the world and shining in the world. Your pecuniary condition and your place in the community demand that you shall not lead an altogether retired life; but your dignity as a man and office-holder would suffer if you went back to your former life, which would also be attended with complete financial ruin. Your vanity must not for the praise of the moment sacrifice the greater and more important aim, which you ought to have before your eyes, namely, to stand forth as an active and useful member of society."

Ellen struck a new chord in the vain man's heart with these words. Yes, he would appear as one who had received from the state so many and so important affairs to attend to, that every moment of his precious time was taken up, and he could only devote a few very brief moments to society.

The office which he held was especially well suited to the rôle of this important person. His vanity had changed garb, but denied itself never. It had now taken upon itself a form which in its consequences became no less oppressive to Ellen, but which was at least less hazardous for the future Still, there was now much to reconcile her to her husband's boasting, as he discharged his duties in a highly meritorious manner and sought for his associates persons of knowledge and culture. He wished, through such association, to show the world his superiority. Besides, he spent more of his time at home, and Ellen, with her superior intellect, her clear insight, and fine womanly judgment, was often the one who guided his actions.

Ellen herself had again appeared as an authoress, and through her success and fame wove many a leaf in the laurel wreath for which Evert was striving. How much this cold life, founded solely

on reaping honor, cost Ellen, who longed so intensely for quiet domestic happiness, her husband did not suspect. He never spoke of anything when they were alone except the success which he enjoyed, and the applause bestowed upon him for his ability. No word of love or tenderness ever passed his lips; only now and then a remark about how important she was to him, and how much she contributed to make his name noted.

How Ellen's heart froze in this home, at the side of this man! But she bore her fate with a fortitude and a strength which were admirable.

Five years elapsed thus. The courted and praised Ochard enjoyed general respect and distinction as a functionary who performed his duties with so much skill, zeal, and ability, that he was regarded as a richly endowed and deserving man.

Proud of the success which attended him, relying blindly on his good fortune, Evert advanced arrogantly on the road of prosperity.

One day when he had obtained a new and honorable promotion, and came home elated over his success, he felt suddenly indisposed. In spite of Ellen's earnest entreaty that he should send for a physician and remain at home, he went instead to a grand supper. On the way he felt so ill, that he was on the point of turning back as he was ascending the steps; but the thought of all the congratulations and praise which awaited him in consequence of his nomination, was altogether too tempting for him to have courage to renounce it.

Two hours after his departure Ellen heard the carriage stop at the door, and in a few moments Evert entered the saloon with a staggering step and a deathly pale countenance.

"I was so sick that I was obliged to leave the company," said he, and threw himself down on a sofa, pressing both hands on his head.

The physician declared that Ochard had taken a violent cold.

The man, spoiled by prosperity, was now compelled to take to his bed and exchange all the flattery and praise which had constituted his happiness for a couch of pain, to which not a single one of his many friends came; for the doctor declared, three days after he was attacked, that the patient had the small-pox. His handsome face was soon fearfully disfigured. His wife did not leave his side for a moment, but sat there as his comforter in this bitter trial. Suddenly the illness changed character and seemed to take a turn which put his life in danger.

The doctor said to Ellen at one of his visits, —

"You must prepare yourself for the worst; your husband's condition is very critical."

One evening when the fever had somewhat abated and Evert could understand her, Ellen tried in her mild and loving way to prepare him for the possibility that he might die. He listened to her in silence; when she finished and pressed his hand in tears, he murmured, —

"A looking-glass!"

Ellen tried to persuade him to refrain from looking at himself; but he cried with great impatience, —

"A glass!"

Just then the physician entered; and not knowing so well as Ellen what a high value Ochard set on his appearance, he seized a little hand-glass and held it before him. Scarcely had Evert thrown a glance in it, before he uttered a cry of despair. In the night the fever increased, and the following day the physician no longer gave any hope of his recovery. Once, in a lucid moment, Evert called to his wife, and when she bent down over him he whispered, —

"Promise to write my — my — obituary. — A distinguished man — so do I wish — you to call — me. Ellen, prom-

ise — promise — to write — it — so that — you — do me — justice — "

"I promise," faltered she.

"Do not — show — my face — no one — no one — must be allowed — to see it — promise — "

"All shall be as you desire," whispered she in tears.

"A large — funeral — in carriages. All — the councillors — all — from the higher — circles. — The obsequies — in — the church — of — of — "

The words died away, they were his last.

Five years had gone over Evert of Ochard's grave and effaced his memory from the hearts of his friends. This name, of which he had wished to make so much, was forgotten; and only when some acquaintance visited the new churchyard and read the words on the stately monument, was the passing remark made: "Is it here that Ochard is buried? He was a vain fool all his days!" And with this they said all that they had to say about him.

We will do like the world, leave him to oblivion and the grave, and transport ourselves to a more enlivening spot than the resting-place of the dead.

The sun cast friendly beams upon the beautiful Åkershof, Count Uno Kerner's estate. In the wide-spread park, at a place where one had a free prospect over the sea, a man and woman were sitting at each other's side, he of about fifty, she forty years of age. Both their faces wore that expression of quiet peace which domestic happiness calls forth. She leaned her head against his shoulder, while her hand softly caressed a child, which slumbered in the mother's lap. The man's arm was twined around his wife's waist, and both seemed absorbed in that peculiar feeling of dreamy felicity which the beauties of nature produce in a happy heart.

"Do you know, Ellen, what day it is to-day?" asked the man and pressed her faithfully to his heart.

"Our little boy's second birthday," said Ellen looking at him with a loving glance.

"And our fourth anniversary. Three have already gone by since we were united, but is our love any weaker to-day than three years ago? Say, Ellen, do I love you less now than then?"

"No, you love me more than ever, and I feel more closely united to you every day. O, how deeply, how boundlessly do I love you, my noble mate!"

"And yet how unobserved have our lives passed!"

"Domestic happiness is more complete the more it is separated from the world's bustle and folly. Ah! my beloved Uno, how rich in true happiness have not these three last years been; yet I often fear that it is too great and that I do not deserve it."

"You not deserve your happiness, you tender, devoted, high-minded woman, who with so much courage and fortitude struggled with every weakness at the time when your life was an unceasing trial! I often fear, on the contrary, that I shall not be able to make you as happy as I desire, and as you deserve to be."

So Ellen had at last, after so many bitter trials, seen her beautiful golden dream of domestic bliss realized, and Providence had given her a rich recompense for the period in which she felt so disappointed in life and in her hopes, through the love which now surrounded her and filled her heart. How rich she now was! She had a mate who adored her and whom she loved with all the devotion of her nature. She had a blooming and beautiful child, and a charming home in the midst of lovely scenery. Everything around and within her contributed to make her as perfectly happy as one can be here on earth.

Countess Emy Rubens had the satisfaction of seeing her foster-daughter as happy as her own child. She felt grateful to Providence for bestowing upon her the greatest comfort which can come to a mother, that of seeing her children happy and deserving to be so.

Alma Kerner had been married to Henrico four years, and the Kerners also had the joy of witnessing their daughter's happiness.

In society, where Ellen had no longer been seen since Ochard's death, she was as completely forgotten as her departed husband. New actors on the stage of folly drew the general attention, to be forgotten in a few years like Ellen and Evert.

A REMINISCENCE OF KREUZNACH.

A REMINISCENCE OF KREUZNACH.

One beautiful evening in the beginning of July, 1862, I arrived at Kreuznach.

The place is surrounded on three sides by mountains whose terrace-like ledges are covered with luxuriant grapevines. A fine fruit-bearing plain extends eastward for the distance of a mile, finding its boundary at the foot of a picturesque chain of hills. The river Nahe flows through the town, dividing it into two parts, the new and the old.

The region around Kreuznach seems to have been known to the Romans, and it is said that in the time of Claudius Drusus, twelve years before Christ, they built a castle in Bingen for the protection of their military settlement; the walls near the town are supposed to be their work. Somewhat later the Germans became the rulers of the territory, until they were also driven away, in the year 449, by the Frank, King Clodwig. Kreuznach must have received its name and origin simultaneously with this event, according to the tradition, from a cross which was raised on the island.

"The monks came on a pilgrimage to the island through the forest," says the story, converting both old and young to the cross by means of the cross." A town rose where only huts had stood before, and this town was called Kreuznach, after the cross on the island.

It is said that Ludwig the Pious sometimes resided in Kreuznach; but it is not known, however, where the palace, the so-called Osterburg, stood, for it was destroyed in the year 893 by the Normans.

During the Thirty Years' War the town was several times in danger of being razed to the ground. In the year 1620 it was blockaded by the Spaniards; in 1631 it was hard pressed by Gustavus, the second Adolphus, and in 1639 was taken by storm by Duke Bernhard of Weimar, the leader of the Swedish Army.

Kreuznach in its appearance, its many narrow, crooked streets, and old-fashioned buildings, presents nothing inviting to the strangers who flock there from all countries in the summer for the sake of the waters. The only thing noteworthy is the cross in the "Wirthkirche."

What the town lacks in regard to the style of its edifices is made up by its environs, which, with the varied and beautiful scenery, make Kreuznach one of the pleasantest of places.

On the so-called island is found the spring, from which the countless guests believe that they derive health and strength. It has received the name of Elisabeth's Spring.

It was a sunny morning, the day after my arrival at Kreuznach, when I also presented myself at the spring, with a cup, to commence my drinking. The place swarmed with people. All possible tongues were spoken there. They drank the salt water, promenaded, puffed, or listened to the music. Coteries of different nations were formed here and there.

In one place a number of Frenchmen had gathered around the beautiful and elegant Madame N——, who was born in France and married to a Hollander. There again the homely, but richly

dressed Princess G——sky, from Moscow, was promenading; and the lively Marquise D—— laughed and chatted with her companions; while Lady H—— quite seriously and with English dignity conversed with some countrymen. A little farther on a lady and two gentlemen had stopped in the midst of their promenade to devour with intense interest the contents of a newspaper which communicated fresh intelligence from America, their native land. At some yards' distance from them the name of Garibaldi was mentioned by two Italians, with glowing enthusiasm; and there, quite near the spring, stand several Swedes who empty their glasses with becoming sobriety, while a troop of Germans hasten past them expressing their delight over Kreuznach's *wunderschöne* scenery.

With my head in a whirl from the crowd and the Babel of tongues, I turned away from the place and took the road to the left, which goes down to the bank of the Nahe.

I walked slowly, and stopped ever and anon to contemplate the vine-clad hills on the other side of the river, which stood there as if on guard to protect with their strong arms the vale in which Kreuznach is situated.

When I had come to the end of the road at the point where it joins one of the streets of the town, I turned; but found myself at this opposite two ladies, one elderly, the other quite young.

There are faces which at the first glance make an ineffaceable impression. Such a face was that of the elder lady. It did not strike me by its beauty or the traces of past loveliness, but through the character which was stamped upon it.

Every feature, every line, told that her life had been devastated by some storm that had swept over it.

The young girl, who walked at her side, chatted and laughed with the unconcern of youth. I did not hear what she said, but I saw the elder lady smile at the winning child. That smile contained a whole biography. It lay on the lips, but did not proceed from the heart. It was gentle, and yet cold; kind, and yet sad.

The next morning, when all again assembled at the spring, I looked among the throng for the person who had awakened so lively an interest in me the day before. I soon found the one I sought. When her companion, the young girl, had emptied her glass, they walked away from the spring and turned off at the road to the Nahe. I followed them, and seated myself on one of the benches which are placed there. They walked back and forth, thus giving me an opportunity of studying the deeply melancholy face.

While I followed them with my eyes, I framed in thought the life-history of the one whose appearance had so struck my imagination. She had been unhappy as a mother. Death had snatched away all her children, except this one, who walked at her side, and for whom she now endured the torment of life.

This was about the way I sketched her past life, but without feeling satisfied, however. The unknown was like a book, the title of which excites curiosity, but of whose contents one nevertheless stands in ignorance.

After taking exercise for a while, they returned to the spring, and at the same moment some one rose from the bench on which I was sitting. I now perceived for the first time that a gentleman had sat there.

He had a very singular appearance.

He was so sunburnt that his complexion had become dark brown, which it had certainly not been originally. The hair was dark, yet had no shade of black, and the abundant beard which covered half his face was even light. The eyes lay deep under a pair of bushy eyebrows and looked fierce at first sight, but on a

nearer view one discovered that they were very mild.

When he rose from the bench he sighed deeply and followed the two ladies to the spring.

Notwithstanding my zealous efforts, several days elapsed without my being able to learn their names.

I had in the mean time observed that the above-described gentleman, like me, could spend a long time in looking at the elderly lady and her young companion, or follow them at some distance as if afraid of losing them from sight.

That this observation led me to the conclusion that the man with the bushy eyebrows, who seemed to be about forty years of age, was in love with the young maiden, is a matter of course.

Chance was however to bring me into connection with the two ladies sooner than I hoped, and place us quite unexpectedly on a familiar footing with each other.

I was staying at the Weber hotel, situated at the left hand as one crosses the bridge leading from the promenade.

The Weber hotel is a fine large building, like most of the hotels in Kreuznach. All the rooms were occupied by guests, who came there for the waters and the bathing.

Nobody takes any notice of his neighbors abroad, but one is generally in complete ignorance of their appearance as well as their social position.

Late one evening, as I still remained sitting on my balcony, I was disturbed by some one who came rushing into my room, and to my no slight surprise the daughter of the lady who had so deeply interested me stood before me.

In fine and fluent German she begged me to come into their room, for one of the neighbors had been taken sick with them.

I followed her, and was not a little astonished when I found that we were living not only in the same house, but on the same floor.

When I entered their room the young girl's mother was occupied with an old lady, who writhed in convulsions on the floor.

A physician was procured, and with the assistance of the servants we had the sick woman, an old Russian who resided in the hotel, removed to her own room.

Through this occurrence our acquaintance was formed.

The elder lady was a Frau Spindler from Berlin, and the young girl a relative of hers that she had adopted as her own child.

She told me this much immediately. They had come to Kreuznach for the young Louise's sake, who was to go through a cure.

When the acquaintance was fairly made, we were daily and almost hourly together; and I can say that I have very seldom been in connection with persons who pleased me more than these two strangers.

With regard to the man with the fierce aspect, whom I continually found in Louise's way, I obtained from a countryman the information that he was an English cosmopolite, who, after travelling all around the world, had happened to be attacked with the gout or some such ailment, for which he was now staying at Kreuznach.

He was considered very wealthy, for he literally strewed money around him. Besides, he kept himself apart from the rest of the company at the springs, and it was utterly impossible to make his acquaintance.

The days succeeded each other very quickly, and I had soon been in Kreuznach three weeks. Two more and I should be obliged to part from my lovely neighbors.

One day I said to Frau Spindler, —

"Have you remarked that there is a man here who is continually in your and Louise's way?"

"No, madam, I have not," she replied, and looked at me.

"Turn round and cast a glance at the bench there; you will then discover him."

Frau Spindler did so; but only bestowing a cursory look on the man, she said, —

"It is possible that he has been struck by Louise's appearance, but he no longer belongs to the age in which love plays any part in life. He can consequently not be dangerous to her."

This remark led us into a conversation upon human passions.

Frau Spindler expressed herself in a manner which gave a plain indication that she had suffered very much from them.

"Do you know, madam," said I, "before I became acquainted with you, your appearance made so lively an impression upon me, that I desired to possess the power of reading the book of the past, and of learning what your experience had been. During the progress of our acquaintance this desire has increased, and at the present moment I would give a good deal to hear your life-history."

"And wherefore?" asked she with a melancholy smile.

"Because the trials you have passed through have left their stamp upon your face, ay, upon your whole being."

"And if it were so, it would not be strange." She sighed and added after a short pause: "Before we separate I will comply with your desire. I will relate to you the short, but dreary story of my life."

Here we were interrupted by Louise, who came to us. She had taken a long walk with some young ladies from Berlin, belonging to their acquaintance.

Two or three days after this, when Louise had gone on a pleasure trip to Wiesbaden in company with these countrywomen, Frau Spindler proposed that she and I should make the long-spoken-of, but continually deferred visit to Rheingrafenstein, a very remarkable ruin an hour's distance from Kreuznach. I eagerly accepted the proposal, but regretted that Louise could not be with us, as she had so desired to have a nearer view of the ruin."

Frau Spindler replied to this remark of mine, —

"In my company Louise will never go to Rheingrafenstein; I have a prejudice against taking her there which you will understand when you have visited the place."

Of course I could have nothing to say against this, and it was decided that we should start directly after dinner.

The air was clear, the sun shone warm and the wind slumbered on the tops of the mountains, when our carriage rolled away from Kreuznach, taking the road to the right of Kuhberg through a thick little wood which had been changed into a park and decorated with small castles and turrets.

Here we left our carriage and dismissed the coachman, as we were obliged to continue our way on foot to Gans Mountain, which we had decided to visit first.

Gans, the highest peak in the mountain ridge, guards Rheingrafenstein's rocks, and is one of the innumerable witnesses of God's greatness and might which nature has to exhibit. It reminds of a time when our beautiful planet had a different aspect from the present.

Gans is a collection of isolated Plutonic masses, which through some subterranean power have been upheaved from the earth's centre, and formed into these gigantic crags upon its surface.

The view from this remarkable mountain is enchanting beyond description.

At the foot of the towering rocks a stream rushes forth to the beautiful Münster am Stein, and behind this Kausenberg and a part of Kreuznach appear. To the right of Münster you have the

mighty Rothenfels, with its innumerable pinnacles, buttresses, and hollows, changing from red to green in all the various shades. Farther away to the left you behold Norheim, surrounded with its vine hills, which as it were supports itself on Rothenfels; the eyes and mind are then chained by the ruins of Ebernburg. Away in the distance and illumined by the sun's rays are seen Johannesberg and Wiesbaden. There is in all directions an endless variety of woods, mountains, thriving vineyards, blooming hillsides, smiling dales, populous villages, and antiquities from past ages.

The picture was beautiful, the impression striking, and the memory of it indelible.

When we had contemplated this grand panorama a long time, we descended Gans Mountain, and took the road to the right leading to the summit upon which Rheingrafenstein's ruin is situated.

After a very fatiguing walk we found ourselves at last upon the platform which is formed over the ruins.

The amazement and surprise which seizes the mind at the sight of these remains of a castle, built upon the point of a perpendicular rock and suspended as it were over the abyss, cannot be rendered in words.

Above the ruin, where it forms the platform, a little cross of iron has been erected.

My attention was so exclusively engrossed by the prospect from the ruin, that I had entirely forgotten to notice my companion.

Finally I turned to her to make some inquiries; but these died away on my lips, for I found her sunk down at the foot of the little cross. She sat there as if exhausted by fatigue, with her head leaning on her hands.

"How are you? do you feel ill?" I asked, frightened.

Frau Spindler raised her bowed head and fastened her large soulful eyes on me, saying quite faintly, —

"It is nothing. Do not mind the weakness which seizes me when I again find myself here, after an interval of so many years; here on the spot where I played as a child, or listened to stories about this castle. Ah, how happy I have been here, and yet how miserable!"

"You have thus lived in this region?" said I.

"Yes, I was born in the valley at the foot of this mountain."

A pause followed this answer. I did not consider it right to ask my companion any further questions concerning her earlier experience, but said in the course of a few moments, —

"Has this ruin no history?"

"O yes, certainly, although it is very incomplete; but what is lacking in respect to its history fiction has endeavored to supply, for many and wonderful are the legends related about these relics of a strong and mighty castle. The actual time of its erection is unknown. The first authentic information we have of it dates from the year 1282, when the Counts of Rheingau, after the battle of Sprendling and the destruction of their stronghold Rheinberg, built Stein Castle here. In spite of its apparent inaccessibility, the fort was several times taken and destroyed by the enemy. Rheingrafenstein's total demolition was accomplished by the French in 1689, and since then it has been a ruin, resembling a dread phantom which guards the point of the rock."

"And how do the stories run that are told about this shade of the past?"

"There are too many of them to be repeated," answered Frau Spindler; "but I will relate one to you which made a certain impression on me when I was young, and has had an influence on my life. This story is so closely allied with my sorrows, that I will in connection with it tell my life-history, and thus

fulfil my promise to you. This place seems fitting for it, if you have no objection."

I assured her that the proposition was particularly agreeable to me; and when I had seated myself on a moss-covered rock at a little distance from her, she began her narrative, which we will call —

THE LEGEND OF RHEINGRAFENSTEIN.

I lost my parents early (began Frau Selma Spindler). They lived down there in Huthendalen, which lies beneath us at the foot of the mountain.

When my parents died they left nothing but debts behind them.

My Uncle Conrad Spindler, who resided in the outskirts of the village off there, and owned a large vineyard, purchased my father's house and removed to it. He then adopted his orphan niece as his own child, and brought me up with his two sons, Rolf and Gerhard. Before I speak further of them, however, I will tell you the story of the origin of Rheingrafenstein.

While I was growing up, there was in the valley another orphan girl by the name of Gretchen, who was demented. It was said that she had become so from unhappy love.

She was the delight of all the children, because she knew all the legends about the ruins in this region, especially Rheingrafenstein.

If any stranger came to the village, then it was Gretchen who became his guide and related everything credible and incredible about the ruins. She was also in the habit of spending whole days up here, singing her songs about proud knights and fair maidens.

I especially as a child had taken a particular fancy to Gretchen, and whenever I saw her I followed her up here to listen to some new story.

Among the many she related, the one concerning the origin of Rheingrafenstein, made the deepest impression upon me, and I could not often enough hear it repeated by Gretchen, who on her part seemed to be most interested in telling just this. It ran thus: —

There was once, many hundred years ago, a Rhine Count who was in strife with the Archbishop of Mentz. During these feuds he fell into such severe straits that he was obliged to seek safety in flight, and then came to the foot of the rock upon which the ruins now stand. Astonished at nature's mighty freak in raising this perpendicular cliff, he exclaimed, —

"Here I will have a castle; I could then defy the priests. But no mortal would dare to ascend that rock, still less build a stronghold there, unless the Devil should serve him as a builder."

Scarcely were these words uttered when Satan stood before the Count, saying, —

"I will help you, but with the condition that the first one whom I behold through the window of the new castle shall be my property."

The Count struggled in the beginning against the temptation of gaining an impregnable fastness on the summit of the crag, but the Evil One finally overcame his scruples. The contract was made between them.

The next morning when the Count awoke, his eyes fell on the mountain, and lo and behold there stood a castle whose turrets and pinnacles glittered in the morning sun. Uncertain whether he dreamed or was awake, he rubbed his eyes, but the castle which Beelzebub and his imps had raised during the night did not disappear.

The Count then remembered the compact that was made and a nameless horror took possession of his soul. He dared not enter the castle.

While overpowered by this anguish,

his wife came, in order to rescue her husband from his difficulty by means of a stratagem which she had devised.

She had done as women have been accustomed to do in all times, — she had listened to the conversation between her husband and Satan, and resolved to cheat the latter.

"My lord and consort," said she to the amazed Count, "have no fear, but enter your castle undauntedly; I have already attended to the Devil's steak."

Up the mountain, ahead of the Count, hobbled an old ass, with a knight's mantle on his back, and a barret-cap over his eyes. On coming in to the castle the ass made directly for the window.

The Devil was thus fooled by a woman, and was obliged to be content with the ass; but he swore that he would have his revenge.

The first night the Count and his consort slept within the walls of the castle, Satan appeared to the latter, and accosted her, —

"You thought you could impose upon me," said he, "but you shall learn that it did not succeed. Within these walls you will give birth to a daughter, who in beauty and grace is destined to surpass all the women of the land. At seventeen years of age she shall be betrothed to a noble knight, but the day before the wedding she will be carried away, and if you wish to find her, it must be in my kingdom. This time you shall not deprive me of my property."

The years went by; the Countess forgot the Devil's words. She gave birth to a daughter, who became beautiful as an angel, and the pride of her parents.

At her birth the mother remembered the dreadful prophecy, but as the girl grew up it again fell into oblivion.

The fair Adelgunda was spoken of far and wide for her beauty. The knights came from all parts to win her love and to compete for the prize of her hand; but they were obliged to return unheard.

Two noble knights then presented themselves, nephews of her father. The elder, Eberhard, came to ask Adelgunda's hand; the younger, Kuno, accompanied his brother.

Eberhard had a frank disposition, a noble heart, and was known for his bravery. Kuno was handsome and a mighty bard, who charmed men and women with his songs.

When Eberhard asked for the beautiful Adelgunda's hand, which her father had previously promised him, he obtained it of her without needing to appeal to this promise, and the two were betrothed.

Shortly afterwards Eberhard was called away to take part in a feud with another Rhine count. Kuno remained with his brother's betrothed.

He sang of love both day and night; he knew how to clothe this feeling in ardent words, and Adelgunda listened to the songs and to the words until her own heart was kindled by them and forgot — Eberhard.

Happy over his many victories, the faithful lover returned to celebrate his wedding with Adelgunda, whom he loved with all his heart.

But Adelgunda's glance was shy and her cheeks were pale; she no longer smiled at her lover.

Eberhard remarked that his betrothed was not like herself, and he asked her what it could be that troubled her young life, begging her to tell him the truth. But Adelgunda did not wish to confess that her heart had betrayed its trust and fallen under the influence of a criminal love for the brother of her betrothed. She replied that she was just the same as usual.

A banquet was to be given in the large hall, the like of which had never been seen before; for the Count was now to give his beautiful daughter in marriage.

The night before the wedding, Adelgunda's mother could not sleep A

nameless anxiety had seized her heart. At midnight she was still awake, and then heard a voice which called her by name. She raised herself quickly and looked in the direction from whence the voice came. The Holy Virgin stood before her and addressed her thus, —

"Unhappy woman, how have you watched over your child when you allowed her to enter upon the road which leads to destruction? Stand up, weak mother, go to your daughter and see what has become of her."

The Holy Mother disappeared, and the Count's wife, who had entirely forgotten the trick she played Satan and the revenge he swore to take upon her, awakened her consort and told him of the apparition. The Count smiled at it and said that she dreamed, after which he turned to the wall and went to sleep.

The Countess could not follow his example, but left her bed quickly and hurried to the maiden's chamber.

As she reached the room she heard the clash of weapons within. She threw open the door and her amazed eyes met a spectacle terrible to behold. Eberhard and Kuno were engaged in a desperate conflict with each other. Adelgunda lay in a swoon in a corner of the room. The unhappy mother uttered a shriek of horror. At the same moment Kuno's sword pierced his brother's heart. The unfortunate mother saw no more, but as she fell to the floor she heard a heart-rending cry from her daughter, and Satan's voice, which said to her, —

"Your daughter has broken her faith, has loved both brothers, and been the cause of this quarrel and fratricide; now she belongs to me."

A sulphureous vapor filled the air, followed by a terrific thunder-clap.

The next morning they found the unhappy mother lying lifeless in her daughter's chamber, and in the maiden's bed slumbered the same old ass which Satan had got for building the castle.

Gretchen always used to conclude the story with these words, —

"The story goes that any love which blooms in the vicinity of Rheingrafenstein's ruins is disastrous to the lovers, and that the curse which rests over it will not be removed until Adelgunda's and Eberhard's spirits have become reconciled; nor till the former has been released from her subterranean imprisonment and obtained the Holy Mother's forgiveness. This shall occur when two faithful hearts beat for each other here in this place, where Adelgunda broke her faith to Eberhard."

Such was the story I heard from Gretchen, and such was the superstitious moral she annexed, which often repeated to me in childhood made a deep impression.

Frau Spindler ceased and sat awhile absorbed in thought, after which she again began to speak.

As I have now told you the legend itself, I will in connection with it continue my own life-story.

My uncle, by whom I had been adopted, was a warm-hearted Christian, strict in his morals, serious in his thoughts, firm in his faith, and incorruptible in his sense of duty.

He had, in the same way as his father and grandfather, cultivated the soil, attended to his vineyards, and in leisure moments developed his intellect by reading and study.

In his youth he had spent two or three years at one of the principal universities in Germany, and had there laid the foundation of the knowledge which he afterwards augmented during his whole life.

To live in daily contact with my uncle and not love him was impossible. To act in opposition to his will, to do anything that displeased him, were faults which even as a child I would have regarded as a crime. Although I was

small, I could sit at his feet, listening to his words as to some grand and exalted music, which I could not rightly comprehend it is true, but which nevertheless charmed my ear. In short, as far back as my thought extends, he was the dearest I possessed.

Before death made me parentless, it had snatched away his wife. Uncle was thus both father and mother to his sons and me.

An older sister of his and my departed mother attended to his domestic economy.

Aunt Monica was a very ordinary woman, neither better nor worse than a thousand others. The only prominent thing in her was that she cherished an almost passionate love for her younger nephew, Gerhard, of whom she had had the care since his mother's death, when the boy was only six months old.

My two cousins, Rolf and Gerhard, were as unlike each other in disposition and character as night and day.

The first-named was of a mild and serious turn of mind. Like his father in thought and opinion, he loved the good, the beautiful, the noble, and was fully convinced that one could be of use even in the most obscure corner of the world, if he only placed love of the neighbor before love of himself. Right-minded and firm, his character was one of those which could easily take a stamp of sternness if he was wronged.

Gerhard again was beautiful as a statue in features, lively, passionate, wild, and changeable to the highest degree. He found our secluded life in the valley unbearably monotonous, and longed to be away among strangers and new scenes.

Passionate even to rashness, he had already as a boy been a source of continual anxiety to Aunt Monica and of sorrow to his father, who neither with severity nor kindness was able to tame this temper which was irritated at the slightest opposition.

Toward his brother he entertained, as far back as I can remember, a deep-seated feeling of spite and bitterness; in the beginning this started from the fact that Rolf was stronger, and was afterwards nourished by the esteem in which the latter was held for his exemplary habits, diligence, and obedience to his father.

As Rolf grew up, he had only one endeavor, and that was to please his father and to correspond to the claims which the latter had upon him, so far as stood in his power.

He consequently became the example I set up for my behavior, and in my childish heart Rolf was the one I admired next to Uncle Conrad. He was besides six years older than I, and through his affection for me and his judgment was my guiding star to the right and the good.

Gerhard, on the contrary, was the joy and torment of my childhood. His audacious merriment amused me, his violence frightened and exercised a tyrannical effect over me.

Gay, foolhardy, bold, and fickle, Gerhard was to me an actual fever. I never knew from one moment to the other how he would be to me; for it only needed a word to make him enraged. If we played, he wearied of the play immediately and flew from one to the other. He could desire a thing with the greatest intensity as soon as any obstacle was encountered, and then defy everything and risk life and limb for it; but when he attained the longed-for object, the pleasure was gone, and the same thing which he had just tried with life and blood to win was, when he once possessed it, of no value.

One afternoon he discovered a bird's nest high up in a tree which overhung the brook. He spoke of it, and declared his intention of getting the nest the following day.

The morning came, and he went there as soon as the sun was up. He climbed

to the top of the tree, but some one had been before him. In the indignation at being foiled in his hopes, he threw himself headlong from the tree, and was carried home bleeding and badly hurt.

At another time he and Rolf were to take a ride up to Ebernburg. Gerhard declared that he would get there first. Rolf's horse was, however, swifter than his, so that he arrived a few minutes before his brother; this so irritated Gerhard, that he was on the point of casting himself from the ruins of the large watch-tower that stands on the edge of the rock and hangs over a depth of several hundred feet. He wished to be the first in everything, and could not bear to have any one dispute this right or place any obstacle in his way.

That such a disposition should inevitably expose itself to trouble and the punishment of a wise and considerate father is a matter of course; but punishishment and remonstrances effected no change. Gerhard neither feared the one nor heeded the other, for he did not love anybody or anything so much as his own will.

At seventeen years of age he and Rolf were sent to Heidelberg. The latter remained there three years; but Gerhard returned home quite unexpectedly after a year's absence. His arrival surprised all, but rejoiced none. He came back destitute of almost everything and on foot, for on his way home he had made a tour through the country around the Rhine.

During the first weeks he was at home he appeared considerably changed. He was more quiet, kept himself in our valley, and seemed to exert himself, while Rolf was away, to reconcile his father with the bad results of his first stay at the academy.

Quiet, peace, and work were however nothing to him. He soon tired of this, and again began to roam round hunting, while he succeeded in stirring up hostilities with the youth of the vicinity. He did not care for books or studies, and when his father reproached him for it, he replied, —

"Let me once more go to a university, and I promise that it shall make a man of me. I was not born to be master of a vineyard. Still, I will not go to Heidelberg, but to Berlin."

Conscientious in all things as my uncle was, he fitted out his troublesome son for the second time, and sent him, after a year's residence at home, to Berlin.

Shortly after his departure, Rolf returned, and was then to devote himself to agriculture and the care of the wide-stretched vineyards.

Two years elapsed, in which Gerhard continued to be away.

How he attended to his studies during the time I do not know. He did not ask for anything more in the way of money than his father allotted to him, but Aunt Monica sent him one sum after another out of her private income.

During his absence time passed in our valley like a smiling dream.

Uncle and Rolf surrounded me with all possible love, and the latter was now my teacher. I received through his care an education far beyond what other girls in this region enjoyed.

Being earnest and religious, they both considered romances and such books as fired the imagination injurious, and in our little home there was not a single book of the kind to be found, but only those which cultivated the intellect and heart.

Without anything which could stimulate the fancy or create a desire for the romantic, I developed from the child to the maiden.

Surrounded by grand and beautiful scenery, enjoying the most disinterested friendship, and inhaling only a moral atmosphere, I could be said to possess everything which could exert a beneficial influence upon my moral, intel-

lectual, and æsthetic nature. I had also, during these years in which my understanding awoke to full consciousness, felt so happy in this hidden corner of the world, so thankful to Providence for the comfort I enjoyed, that I did not have a single unfulfilled desire. All was peace, all was harmony, both within and around me. I enjoyed my existence, as the bird in the wood must enjoy his when he sings so glad and free.

I loved and adored my uncle and Rolf, and was loved by them. I did not reflect upon the possibility that things could become otherwise than they were.

Frau Spindler leaned her brow on her hand and added in a tone of deep regret: —

O, when I think of those days of peace and bliss, it seems to me as if the height of my happiness must then have contained in its bosom all the sufferings which afterwards befell me. From the height of happiness one easily falls to the depth of misery.

One day, it was in the spring, — I was then sixteen, — Uncle Conrad said to me, —

"Get your hat, Selma, and let us take a walk to Weirenthal. I have something to say to you."

Glad to be allowed to accompany him, I obeyed the order. We went along the mountain path which turned off at the left of our dwelling and wound between luxuriant groups of trees and dewberry vines, following a clear brook that rushed quite wildly down the steep declivity, until we came to Weirenthal, where it is said that Ulric von Hutton, during his stay at Ebernburg, spent many solitary and delightful hours.

Weirenthal was a place to which my uncle always preferred to turn his steps. During the whole way he only talked about the treasures of the vegetable kingdom.

When we arrived there, he seated himself at the side of the brook under a large tree and drew me down beside him, saying, —

"Now, my child, we will speak some serious words. Your life has hitherto passed like a quiet dream, without your even thinking of the possibility that it might change form; and yet, Selma, this can so easily occur. The great God may be pleased to call me hence, and then you would stand without support, a defenceless reed exposed to the storms of fate. My duty enjoins me, so far as lies in my power, to provide for your future and the security of your happiness.

"When your mother lay at the point of death and bequeathed to me the dearest she possessed, her daughter, I promised her to try, with God and the Holy Virgin's assistance, to protect you from meeting the same unhappy fate to which she had fallen a victim, namely, to die of sorrow at having wasted her love upon a husband who was unworthy of it.

"I promised to remove you from the influence of other's passions, and to shield your young heart from their mastery, while I endeavored to prepare you an unobserved happiness far from the battle-field of the world."

Uncle ceased, and I ventured to make the inquiry if my mother was unhappy.

"Yes, very," he replied. Laying his hand on my head, he continued: "I love you, you, my adored sister's only child, so deeply, that you occupy the first place in my heart, and I should not forgive it if either of my sons in the future were to heap sorrow upon this head. Any such thing would be so hard a trial, that I do not think I have the power to bear it with submission. May the Mother of God watch over and protect thee, thou light of my eyes!"

Just as Uncle said these words there was a rustling in the bushes behind us, and Gretchen, the crazy girl, passed by us, saying, —

"Good evening, I have news for you

from Rheingrafenstein. There is a storm brewing up there; strange things are going to happen. Be on your guard down there in Huthendal, for it is you upon whom the evil will fall."

Gretchen disappeared at the turn of the path.

Uncle sat silent a long time. A cloud of sorrow now rested upon his brow, usually so calm and light.

I, who was not tormented in the least by fear for the future or any sad forebodings, attached no weight to what the crazy girl had said, but only felt surprised at Uncle's changed appearance.

He said nothing for quite a while. Finally he took away the hand that rested on my head, patted my cheek, and said, —

"However much we may try to cultivate and enlighten our minds in order to banish all prejudice from our souls, some shadow of superstition will still remain there. So is it with me. I have worked all my life to become an enlightened Christian, who does not place his trust in anything but the all-good God, and yet I am now surprised to find that I allow the words of a crazy girl to make an impression on me; and why? Because her prediction concerns the dearest I possess, my child. So there it is, when the heart becomes too much attached to earthly beings, it is disquieted by an unbecoming fear of temporal misfortunes. May God in his goodness pardon me this sin!"

My uncle clasped his hands and sat absorbed in silent prayer, then he made the sign of the cross and resumed, turning to me, —

"Before I impart to you what I hope and desire with reference to your future, I will, according to the wish of your departed mother, briefly relate to you her experience. It is a speaking proof that human happiness can never spring up from the soil of passion.

"Your mother was beautiful and good. She, like Monica and me, was born and brought up in the home I now occupy. When your mother was seventeen, she received the attentions of a much-respected man from Kreuznach. Our father promised him his daughter's hand. The alliance was such that it seemed to unite in itself all possible prospects of happiness; but as our father considered your mother too young, no betrothal was to take place before a year. In the mean time your father made acquaintance in our parents' hospitable home, and conceived for my beautiful sister a lively and passionate attachment. Like a contagious disease, this seized her heart also, and under the influence of it she told her father that she could not become the wife of the man to whom he had promised her hand, but that her peace and happiness required that she should be allowed to marry the one she loved. Her father did not wish to force her to a marriage against her inclination, so she became your father's wife, and that so hastily, that one might say she rushed headlong into wedlock. The first months of their marriage was one continual intoxication of bliss; but like all other intoxications, this also had an awakening, and then your mother perceived that her husband had changed behavior. The cup of joy was drained, love died out, and weariness had taken its place. He no longer loved his wife, home was monotonous to him; their child's crying seemed to him unbearable, and his food never pleased him. He gradually became a stranger to his own home. He was gone whole days, and finally he took long journeys. The tenderness he had once lavished upon his wife he now gave to other women; he neglected his estate and his business, destroyed his property, and died far from his wife, child, and home, in consequence of a duel that he had had in Wiesbaden. Sorrow, jealousy, and trouble had undermined your mother's health, so that she shortly afterwards

followed her husband to the grave, confiding you to my care. And now, Selma, what lesson can be drawn from your mother's life? Simply this, that when persons in the moment of passion decide their fate, they have only built upon the sand and must sooner or later be buried under the ruins. Had your mother married the man her father destined for her, she would have come into the enjoyment of that enduring and certain happiness which has its ground in mutual respect and affection. Her last request to me was, that I should so instruct you, that you would never, like her, throw away the true gem to grasp the false, because it might appear more brilliant."

Again there was a pause. I felt depressed in mind from the account of my mother's unhappy marriage.

Probably what I felt could be read in my face, for Uncle said, after a moment's interval, —

"Had I followed the voice of my own heart, I would never have initiated you into your mother's sorrows; but she has so wished, and now, my child, this painful duty is accomplished. Let us therefore pass over to something pleasanter!"

He took me under the chin, raised up my head and added, —

"Now tell me, what do you think of Rolf?"

"What do I think!" exclaimed I; "why, that he is the most perfect being, next to you, that the earth holds."

"That is saying entirely too much of him and me," said my uncle. "There are no perfect beings; we are all poor, poor creatures before the Lord. So you like him very much?"

"More than I can tell."

"I am glad to hear it. You would thus have no objection to becoming his wife!"

"Uncle!" I burst out, and stared at the old man. A feeling of amazement had seized me; for notwithstanding I loved Rolf as much as a heart of seventeen is capable of loving it had never entered my mind that he was to be my husband, or that our brother and sister relation could be changed to the matrimonial.

Uncle resumed quite calmly, —

"Rolf loves you fervently, and with that deep and true love which is usually a security for future happiness. He is a good boy, who will never bring sorrow over your head; I can safely intrust your future to his hands. You, on your side, are a lovely little dove, accustomed to coo in your nest among the mountains, with such a mind and heart that he ought to find with you all the felicity that God in his grace can be pleased to bestow upon those who love and obey him. Through this union, my child, I have placed at your side a support against life's storms, and when I am gone you will have in him your protector, your friend, your other self. Married to Rolf, the fire of passion will never touch your soul or burn your heart, but you will find peace in a pure love. Well, my child, will you have my son Rolf?"

My only answer was to throw myself in his arms and assure him that I was happy and proud over the choice he had made for me.

We then returned home.

Rolf was to take a journey to Bingen on business a few days later, and would not return for a week at least. When he came back, preparations would be made for the wedding, so that it could take place at midsummer. My uncle told me this on the way home.

I forbear to speak of the moment when Rolf clasped me to his heart as his intended wife. I then knew for the first time how fervently I loved him, and he also gave me to understand how deeply I was loved in return.

Two days later, directly after dinner, Rolf started on his journey. It seemed

to me bitter to part with my betrothed then.

When he was gone, I came up here to the ruins to think of my loved one undisturbed.

I seated myself on the same spot where I am now sitting. The moon shone brightly, and I sent a prayer of gratitude to God for the happiness which smiled upon me and which I already regarded as mine.

Quite suddenly the stillness was broken by a song which was heard at a distance, but which gradually came nearer and nearer. It was a song that I had often sung with my cousins. The words, by Pearrius, described the merry times they used to have at Rheingrafenstein.

The voice that sung it I had certainly not heard for two or three years; and although it now sounded stronger than then, it was nevertheless so well known to me that I quite gladly sprang up from my place, exclaiming, "Gerhard!"

In a few moments the singer became visible. I was not mistaken; it was really Gerhard, and he was soon at my side.

His joy at seeing me again was turbulent. He kissed my hands, he took me in his arms and lifted me up high, repeating a thousand times that he was so happy at finding his beloved little sister so beautiful, that in his joy over it he knew not what he did.

When the first stormy outburst had subsided, we sat down side by side to talk. He asked in a single breath a multitude of questions, which he did not give me an opportunity to answer however, but said himself in reply to them,—

"How childish I am to ask you questions. I ought to know well enough that nothing ever occurs in our dear valley, but that everything here pursues its usual course. The storms of life rage on the other side of this mountain, without penetrating to the valley. O, how happy are you who have never left this dale! I envy you your ignorance of the world, and I have returned to you to live and die here. Well, little Selma, have you thought of me any?" added he, clasping my hand in his.

"Yes, indeed I have," was my answer.

"Perhaps your thoughts were fastened upon me when you heard my song?"

"O no, I was then thinking of something entirely different. You said that nothing happens here in our valley; but you are mistaken. Something unusual has actually occurred."

"Indeed! Has Rolf ceased to be a saint, or has some other young man strayed here by chance, or —"

"Ah, you cannot possibly guess what it is, dear Gerhard, and you do best in not attempting it."

"Well, that sounds good. I can assure you beforehand that I am well aware that nothing of an unusual nature has transpired. I know all about this region; one lives and dies here without knowing that he has lived."

"And one marries!" said I.

"Ah ha, Rolf has thus chosen a wife for himself? Well, I congratulate him! I suppose she is as tedious as seven fast-days?"

"I do not know how you will find her," replied I, laughing. "Rolf's intended wife is now before your eyes; for it is me whom he is to marry."

"You?" broke out Gerhard, and rushed up. "No, Selma, that is not possible."

"Yes, it is not only possible, but it is a decided matter," uttered a voice behind us. We turned round, and Gretchen stood there just at the descent. "Do you remember the story of beautiful Adelgunda, whom the Evil One carried away?" asked she with her crazy smile. "That story fits all times."

Propelled by the same feeling, we rose hastily. Without replying to Gretchen's question, we descended in silence the steep path that leads from the ruin to

our valley. When we were half-way down Gerhard seized my hand.

"It is nothing but a jest, Selma, that Rolf and you are to be married? You only wished to fool with me?"

"Why should I wish to do that?" rejoined I.

"It is all the same why, if you only admit that it is so."

"I cannot do that, Gerhard; the thing is just as certain as that we are now on the way home. It was decided two days ago, and our wedding will take place at midsummer."

I said this with the childish pride a girl of seventeen feels when she speaks of getting married.

Gerhard pressed my hand hard and muttered, —

"Inconsiderate child, why did you tell me that? But it is a good while to midsummer, and much can happen before then. Admit that if you had been allowed to choose for yourself, you would never have chosen Rolf?"

"Yes, I certainly should," exclaimed I. "My heart feels proud and happy to belong to him."

"You only make the evil still worse with these words. It would have been better if you had let me believe the contrary."

"Dear Gerhard, how strangely you talk! Who in the whole world should I rather have had for a husband than Rolf?"

"Me!"

"At this moment he stood so that the moon's rays fell on his classic features. An unaccountable feeling went through my soul.

I experienced something resembling fear, and had a good mind to fly far from him.

"So must Kuno have looked when he tempted Adelgunda to unfaithfulness," thought I quite involuntarily, and turned away.

A few days after Gerhard's arrival we received a letter from Rolf, saying that he was obliged to go to Coblenz and Berlin on account of business, and should not return before two or three weeks.

This news troubled me. I felt uneasy with Gerhard, who at the intelligence of his brother's prolonged absence seemed quite glad.

As calm and peaceful as my days had hitherto passed, they were stormy now.

Towards his father Gerhard was more affectionate, attentive, and submissive than ever. He complied with his desires and conformed to his will. He never gave him any cause for displeasure; but the restraint he laid upon himself with respect to Uncle, he considered entirely superfluous with me. He was passionate, bitter, and impatient at one moment, tender, unhappy, and despairing the next.

We had not been together many days before he told me that he loved me, that he should never survive the day when I became the wife of another, etc.

Unacquainted with human passions, without any power to restrain their outbreak, I became the object of a passionate love. He pursued me with his jealousy, tormented me with his complaints, and could lacerate my heart with descriptions of his anguish, until he forced me to some expression of compassion that resembled tenderness. Had I been less inexperienced, I should have known that the only thing a virtuous woman has to do, when she finds herself the object of a love to which she cannot respond, is constantly to maintain an icy coldness, and not allow herself to be tempted out of pity to involuntarily encourage a feeling which she cannot share. As it was, Gerhard, through his wild outbursts, could get me to do much which I afterwards disapproved. I accompanied him in his walks up here, wept over his pangs, and tried to mitigate them with my kindness.

I could not bear to tell Uncle that

Gerhard pursued me with his love, for I did not wish to trouble the old man or disturb the good condition between father and son. I hoped everything from Rolf's return. It never occurred to me for an instant that Gerhard could be a hindrance to my union with Rolf.

At length Rolf came home. I threw myself in his arms with a cry of joy, and he clasped me so faithfully, so warmly to his breast, as he pressed a kiss upon my brow and called me by the tenderest of names.

I felt so safe and calm, believing that I had now found the refuge in which I could repose, without anxiety for the storms of life. Gerhard's wild love should not pursue me there.

In my joy at seeing Rolf again I forgot that Gerhard was a few steps from us, until the sound of his voice reminded me of it.

"Welcome home, Rolf," said he; "I have long desired to see you."

I snatched myself, frightened, from Rolf's arms. I now remembered that Gerhard had said a few days before, that if I dared to show Rolf the least tenderness in his presence he should take revenge upon him for the happiness of which he had been deprived.

Rolf turned from me to him and offered him his hand kindly, with the words, —

"Good morning, Gerhard, I did not see you in the joy of meeting Selma again. You know what she now is to me, and you also understand that at the sight of her I must forget all else."

"O yes, I understand it very well," replied Gerhard with pale lips, and added with a smile of scorn, "brotherly affection generally suffers shipwreck when love comes into play."

One is selfish when young and in love. All the anguish, all the fear, uneasiness, and compassion I entertained for Gerhard was forgotten when Rolf returned, and I enjoyed my own happiness in full draughts, unmindful of Gerhard.

Several happy days elapsed.

Gerhard went off hunting and was never at home. Rolf and I idealized as two young and happy people are in the habit of doing. We built castles in the air for the future, and I forgot to tell Rolf what had happened in his absence, or to mention Gerhard's love for me as I had resolved to do; it passed from my mind when Gerhard was not seen, but I was destined bitterly to repent this forgetfulness in the future.

A week after Rolf's return he went quite early one morning to visit some of Uncle's vineyards, which lay at a little distance.

Gerhard had come home the evening before, and a violent scene occurred between him and me. He declared that if I dared to marry Rolf, he would kill himself. I conjured him to be calm; I wept, I entreated him not to make us all miserable, but my words had no effect on him. He demanded me to give up Rolf; and when I told him that was impossible, he swore that he would not survive the day when I became his brother's wife.

We were in the saloon during this scene. Uncle was out, Aunt Monica had gone to the village, and the servants were at work.

In the midst of it Rolf returned and stepped into the saloon. Both Gerhard and I were agitated. Rolf regarded us with a singular look. He who was glad and smiling when he went out was now more gloomy and stern than I had ever seen him before.

Without saying a single word either to Gerhard or me, he took his way across the saloon and into his room. He closed and bolted the door after him.

When I was alone after Gerhard left, I determined to tell Rolf all. He would certainly prevent any misfortune from occurring. He would talk with Gerhard and bring him to reason. I went to Rolf's door and knocked, calling to him that I had something to say.

His answer was, —

"I have no time, do not disturb me."

Troubled and anxious, I went up to my room, where I spent the whole forenoon.

When I went down into the saloon at dinner-time, I found Uncle and his two sons there. They were conversing on indifferent things. Gerhard walked to and fro. His face showed that behind an apparent calmness he concealed some violent emotion. Rolf looked stern and serious. The look he fastened upon me when I entered had something so singular, that I did not understand its expression.

After dinner I seated myself on the stoop. I had scarcely taken my place, before Rolf came out to me. He stood a moment and contemplated the ruins of Rheingrafenstein overhanging our heads. Then he turned to me with the words, —

"Have you often visited the ruins up there, Selma, while I have been away?"

"Yes," was my answer.

"But you have not been there alone?"

"No, Gerhard and I have gone together."

"Or met there; is it not so?"

"Yes, also that."

"Gretchen has told me so," said Rolf, and turned to go in.

"Stop!" I cried, and seized his hand. "Ah, Rolf, there is something I wish to tell you, but which I have hitherto forgotten to mention, and that is that —"

"You consoled yourself with Gerhard over my absence," said Rolf hastily, and drew away his hand. "You were wrong in forgetting to mention this," added he, and his eyes flashed. "Through your silence you have caused me to doubt much which I hitherto believed."

He again turned from me to go into the saloon.

"Rolf, let me talk with you," I prayed, and tried once more to detain him.

"It is unnecessary, Selma, I know *all*, and desire to spare an explanation which now comes somewhat late."

It was the first time in my life that I saw Rolf out of temper, and I was so troubled over it that I stole away to weep in solitude.

These were the first tears grief drew from me. I went down to the river and seated myself on the bank.

The evening came. The birds sang so gladly in the tops of the trees and the air was full of fragrance. It was one of those charming summer evenings which are so glorious all over the world, but which seem still more glorious in this region. The sun's last rays no longer illumined the summits of the mountains. The moon kindled her pale light and strewed silver over the heights.

Nature's peace around me poured its balm in my soul; the tears ceased to flow, and I again looked hopefully up to heaven. I had not done any wrong; why then should sorrow visit me!

Calm had just returned to my heart, when a voice quite near me uttered, —

"Your place is not here, but up at Rheingrafenstein; go quickly; the two brothers are there. The Evil One sits with open arms, waiting to get one of them in his embrace; for there is again the strife of brothers. How it will end the stars only know. Hasten, girl, to snatch the victim from the jailer of Adelgunda's dark prison. It is Rolf and Gerhard who quarrel up there.

"How the contest will end the one can say
Who carried Eberhard's love away,"

sang the crazy girl, and went off, pointing to the ruins.

How I came here I do not remember. When I reached the top of the ascent, I saw Rolf and Gerhard standing over there at the precipice. Gerhard had laid his hand on Rolf's shoulder, and the latter said in an agitated voice, —

"Unless you can prove to me that it

is you she loves, you will not be able to make me give her up. She would be unhappy at your side, and I hold Selma too dear to wish to promote your happiness at the expense of hers. You have now heard my answer."

"Then she shall not belong to either of us," roared Gerhard. "You have always stood in my way, always been preferred to me; but this time you shall not be happy at my cost." He threw his arms around his brother's body.

A moment they both reeled at the edge of the precipice. What I felt at this, I know not; but it stands clear to my memory that in the next second I had thrown my arms around Rolf's limbs. When I looked up he stood erect, holding Gerhard clasped in his arms.

"Selma!" they both exclaimed. Rolf's arms loosened, and the brothers stood at a little distance from each other.

Rolf bent down to raise me up. His face was deadly pale.

"Stand up, Selma, and try to end this quarrel which has been near costing Gerhard and me our lives and covering our father's gray hairs with sorrow. Say which of us two you love; but speak the truth, as if you stood before God."

"You, Rolf," I faltered, scarcely able to stand.

"Then you have trifled with my heart in an abominable manner," exclaimed Gerhard. "Your words now stand in opposition to all your previous utterances and actions. It is our father's will, not the voice of your own feeling, that you obey, when you say so," added he, seizing my arm. "Why do you lie," continued he with increasing vehemence, "at a moment when it treats of life and death? Why have you not courage to acknowledge the truth, to confess that you love me, when everything with us indicates that it is so. Have you not, during this time in which I have spoken the language of love to you, wept and declared that you would like to make me happy if you could? Have you a single once spoken of your love for Rolf?"

"No, I have not," I stammered; "but that has been because I did not wish to trouble you. O Gerhard, how can you wish to assert that I love you, when much ought to have convinced you of the contrary?"

"You will thus not become mine?" shrieked Gerhard.

"No!"

"Then you shall not be Rolf's either!" cried Gerhard; "you will have to pay dearly for your play with my heart." He started to the edge of the platform, adding, "You may answer for my death before God and my father."

For the second time within the lapse of a few minutes I saw him tremble over the abyss and — fall. I uttered a shriek of despair and sank down on my knees, covering my face with my hands.

"Have you not yet had enough of this mad game?" I heard Rolf say. I looked up quickly.

On the grass plot here at the cross Gerhard lay motionless, with his head fractured and bleeding.

Rolf was on his knees with the whole weight of his body over him, thus holding him still. Gerhard, although badly maimed, made several ineffectual attempts to get up.

Rolf said in a stern tone, —

"It is fruitless for you to try to become free; you ought to know of old that I am the stronger. Lie still, therefore, until you regain the use of your reason."

"Look here, Rolf," said Gerhard, panting; "if you even succeed now in holding me captive, you will be obliged to let go of me some time, and I swear, by all the saints, that if I should be compelled to strangle myself with my own hands, I will not refrain from taking my life, unless Selma gives me the heart she allowed me to hope that I possessed.

You know how little I value life, and you can be sure that I do not care more for it now. It is thus Selma or death."

"If I give up Selma," said Rolf with an effort, "will you then come to your senses?"

"No, that is not enough for me. She must become mine or away with life! I shall not survive this night, I swear it by the shade of my mother."

Rolf rose. He released Gerhard and said, turning to me, —

"You and I are separated. It remains for you, Selma, to decide over his life or death. So act, that you can answer for it before the Highest. May God forgive you for promising love to us both, I shall try to do so."

Tears, this resource of woman in the moment of grief, started down my cheeks. I reached Gerhard my hand, whispering in an almost inaudible voice, —

"As you will."

He seized my hand hastily and tried to rise, but the blood ran from two wounds in his head, and he was again pale and lifeless.

Without saying a word Rolf lifted him up on his strong shoulders, and we went down the steep and narrow path.

Days and weeks elapsed before Gerhard's wounds were healed. I sat by his sick-bed, and dared not leave it for fear of exciting him. It had happened once or twice, that in an attack of jealousy, when I stayed out a little too long, he pulled off the bandage and tore open the half-healed wounds.

What a season of anguish, what weeks of nameless agony!

The day after the terrible occurrence at Rheingrafenstein, Rolf had a long conversation with his father. After it, Uncle said to me that my place henceforth was at Gerhard's bedside. He patted me on the head and looked in my eyes with a deeply sorrowful gaze.

When Gerhard's injuries were almost well and he was fairly on the road of recovery, Rolf came in to him and said that he was going to start the next day, according to their father's desire, on a long journey to France and England, to make himself acquainted with the merchant's calling. He should be gone two or three years. In a perfectly calm voice he enjoined Gerhard to make me happy, and then bade him farewell. Gerhard pressed his brother's hand in silence.

It was late in the evening of the same day when I left Gerhard's room and stepped out into the saloon.

Rolf, who had carefully avoided me all this time, was standing at one of the windows. When I entered he came towards me.

"I leave in the morning before the sun is up," said he, "and will therefore bid you farewell this evening."

He took my hand and led me out on one of the vine-covered porches, adding, —

"Before we part for a long time, perhaps forever, I desire to speak a few words to you, which I beg you to bear in mind."

Without saying anything disapproving about his brother or reproaching me for my silence, he showed me that I had occasioned much evil through it, which might have been avoided if I had immediately at his return told him all. He tried to prove to me that the only thing which palliates a fault is honestly to confess it, and that without truth and sincerity no happiness can be found.

Once or twice, while he was speaking, I tried to interrupt him, for his words showed that he was fully persuaded that I loved Gerhard; but every time I opened my mouth, he stopped me. Finally he said with deep earnestness, —

"Never forget, Selma, that the father of the man who is to become your husband thinks of your future with fear and anxiety. Try to reconcile him to your union with Gerhard; summon all your

power to fulfil your duty in a worthy manner. May God and all the saints protect you, my beloved one."

His lips touched my brow and he left me. I melted into tears.

God alone read my heart and knew how deeply I loved him at this moment.

Rolf was gone, and Gerhard returned to health.

When he was fully recovered, Uncle informed us that he had nothing against our union, since he had heard from Rolf that we ourselves desired it, but that he attached one condition to it, founded upon his knowledge of Gerhard's character. This was that Gerhard should complete his twenty-fourth year before he obtained me as a wife. He was now twenty-two. He should spend the intervening time at home, as he had himself desired to become an agriculturalist and to make himself familiar with this new pursuit.

If at the end of this time Gerhard was faithful in his attachment to me, and stood firm in his desire to take charge of Uncle's place at the border of the village, we should be united.

Gerhard accommodated himself, although somewhat reluctantly, to his father's decision. He hoped to be able to contract the two years to one.

The first year was rich in emotional scenes. It seemed to me as if I had a foretaste of purgatory. Gerhard was distrustful, domineering, exacting, and often indulged in the most wounding remarks. He could not rid himself of the thought that I kept up some secret correspondence with Rolf. Without considering that he had forced the promise of my hand, he blamed me for unfaithfulness, in case I loved Rolf in my heart. One day wild, ungovernable, and ready to take both my life and his own to escape the agony he endured at the thought that I loved another, he was the next tender, repentant, and anxious to do everything to atone for his faults.

Had I been used to such outbreaks, they would perhaps have affected me less: as it was my life had passed quietly and without anything that could be called scenes. This made me feel depressed by my painful position towards Gerhard. I endeavored to conceal my suffering from Uncle, however, and to keep him in ignorance of the explosions between Gerhard and me; but I was not accustomed to disguise, and my cheerfulness had fled. I no longer sang any glad songs, nor rambled, blithe and free from care, among our mountains, but I stayed at home and saw one day pass after another without rejoicing at my existence. When the first year began to draw to an end, I had changed so considerably that Uncle became anxious. He said to me, —

"How is it, Selma? I begin to fear that Gerhard makes your life bitter, and that you already repent the step you have taken."

I looked up in his face and remembered Rolf's farewell words. Throwing my arms about the old man's neck I faltered, —

"I am afraid of not being able to be all that I wish to Gerhard and you."

"Do you really like him?" asked Uncle, patting me.

"Yes, I do; but not as I have liked Rolf."

To repeat the words Uncle then spoke serves nothing. He said that Gerhard was the child who lay nearest his heart, for the very reason that his character was such that it inspired fear and anxiety. Gerhard was the image of his regretted wife. This had made him dear to the father; but just this affection which he cherished for his son had made him try to counteract his faults by means of severity, and to bring the disorderly and turbulent elements in his nature to harmony.

The events which had prevented my union with Rolf, however, had shown

him that Gerhard was still ready to throw away life and salvation in the moment of passion.

"This discovery, my beloved child, has led me to the conclusion that God in his mercy makes him attached to you, so that you with your mild character and the power of love shall succeed in ennobling him. I had wished, through the union between you and Rolf, to secure your happiness. God has decided otherwise; he has chosen you for a higher destiny, that of guiding Gerhard in the way of right. The Holy Mother will give you strength and power to fulfil this destiny."

After this conversation I tried to forget my own sufferings and to keep the idea before my mind that I was Gerhard's good angel, who was to elevate his character.

My manner towards Gerhard changed completely. I did not weep so often, and forced myself to think less of Rolf and more of him. When he had his attacks of jealousy, I exerted all my power to calm him and convince him that it was without cause. I was happier myself from making him contented, and I actually began to think that I could have a beneficial effect upon his disposition and character.

A short season of peace followed, after I tried in a way satisfying to my better feeling to identify myself with the rôle that had been appointed me. My affection for Gerhard became through this more true and real. It gave me a joyful satisfaction when I seemed to read inner contentment in his whole appearance. I endeavored to forget that he had been the one who separated me from my heart's love. One day I shall perhaps love Gerhard with the same feeling that I now entertain for Rolf, thought I. This hopeful period did not last long, however.

Gerhard, who during the few weeks it continued had stayed at home and occupied himself with agriculture and the cultivation of the vine, now began to roam around, hunting again. He no longer looked after the hired men, no longer kept company with Uncle and me. He had only one thought, one desire, and that was to hunt. These hunts, upon which he could be gone several days, awakened Uncle's uneasiness. The consequence of all this was, that when Gerhard returned home, I endeavored with redoubled friendliness to prevail upon him to remain there and not go away any more; but my power over his heart was gone, and he who during the first year had only been governed by his love, and begged on his knees for a little heartiness from my side, now repelled it with impatience; and instead of keeping him at home as I hoped, my attention only drove him from it.

With these new grounds for inquietude, the time advanced.

My Uncle became more and more silent. Gerhard's name was seldom mentioned between us. It was as if we both feared to speak of his unkind behavior.

The second year of our betrothal approached its close, when an event very unusual in our valley occurred, and that was a theft.

Aunt Monica had been in Kreuznach to draw the little means which she had deposited there, and which she agreed to invest in Uncle's estate.

It was somewhat late in the evening when she came home, and all had retired except one servant, who sat up waiting for her. The following morning, before Uncle had risen, Aunt came rushing in to him, crying that she was robbed; that the eighteen hundred thalers she brought home with her the night before were gone.

Uncle and I smiled at this, and would not believe it; but it was so, nevertheless, for the money which the old lady put in her bureau at night had actually disappeared. Aunt Monica notified the

sheriff of the matter, but without being able to mention any one whom she suspected of the theft.

In the course of two or three days, Gerhard, who had been off hunting during this occurrence, returned home. He was in a particularly testy humor, and spent some hours shut up in his room, engaged in writing an answer to a letter from Rolf, which he received on his arrival. Towards evening he went away again, and that without saying a word either to Uncle or me.

The next morning I went up in his room to put it in order before he came home.

Among the papers on his writing-table lay a half-written letter. My eyes fell upon it. It was to Rolf.

My curiosity became at this altogether too great for me to resist the temptation of reading what he had written to his brother.

The contents of the letter were about the following: —

"My dear Rolf: Your last letter was so cursedly tedious and stupid that I was scarcely able to read it through. What use is it for you to lecture me about my changeableness, the culpability of my actions, etc. Such as nature made me, I am once for all, and you need not think that your words have the power to change anything in my character.

"I cannot be like you, it is true; but I am not to blame that my soul has wings and desires to soar, while yours resembles the snail which contents itself with staying in the same place. My feelings need to fly around, require change and contests, in order that they may not kill me. Yes, I should die if I were compelled to bind myself to agriculture, vine-growing, prayer books, and a woman.

"It is of this latter that I wish to speak.

"Thus you reproached me for loving Selma, and for separating you and her by my wild passion.

"Folly! As well reproach the earth because the tornado tears up the trees, as me for being ruled by a violent passion. The earth is not to blame for being devastated by the elements, and I am not to blame because I am filled with ungovernable feelings, and cannot weigh these upon that monstrous balance which is called duty.

"Do you really consider it possible that I could love Selma for any length of time, feel happy at her side, and drag out my life between these mountains, cultivating my fields and rocking my children?

"Can you seriously assert that I am created for such an existence?

"No, I was born for freedom, activity, and change.

"The feeling I had for Selma arose instantly and disappeared as suddenly.

"The fault was my father's, hers, and yours, in seeing in it anything but a passing flame which blazed too high to last long.

"The fire is burned out, and what do you wish me to do with the ashes? I cannot get them to burn. That which is dead cannot return to life.

"My connection with Selma now seems to me like an oppressive burden, something that encumbers and excites my aversion.

"She is to my eyes insipid and monotonous, and I feel an irresistible inclination to hasten far away whenever I see her.

"I conjure you, come back and take your true love again; she is not suited to me, as I once imagined. My only desire is to regain freedom.

"It is in general a sad truth, that the more violent a feeling is, so long as it encounters resistance and seems impossible to satisfy, the more quickly it dies out when the hindrances are taken away and everything cries, You have attained your object!

"As long as Selma's tearful eyes, dejected and cold manner inspired doubts of her love, my soul burned with the desire to come into possession of her heart; but now everything tells me that I possess it, that she loves me with all her heart, and I ask, What shall I do with it? My love cannot do otherwise than die out, when it no longer has anything to disturb and stimulate it. Or do you think that I shall allow an inclination to be sanctioned which has its existence only in the memory of having been? Ah, my honest brother, I leave it to you to —"

Here the letter was broken off. Probably he had got tired of writing longer, thrown it aside, and gone out.

I left his room quickly and tried in solitude to collect my thoughts.

Toward evening I went up to the ruins.

The remembrance of the scene which separated me from Rolf stood vividly before me when I found myself here. I lacked courage to come up here on the plateau where I had seen the same brothers in conflict for my sake who had now both abandoned me. I seated myself under one of the arches, with my head leaning on my hands. I believe that I wept.

Suddenly gay voices were heard outside the ruins. They jested and laughed. It was a party who came to visit this abode of crushed greatness.

I drew back in the darkest corner, to avoid being observed.

The merry company came nearer. I could distinguish what was said.

"Do not ask me to venture up there," uttered a ringing woman's voice. "You others may do it if you choose; but I, for my part, remain here."

"As you will, Clothilda," said another woman's voice. "I shall go there, that is certain."

"And I with you," responded several others.

"With your permission, ladies, I will stay here with Fraulein Clothilda," said a voice which caused me to start. It was Gerhard's.

"Ah yes, why not?" answered the ringing voice; "it may be right well to have a cavalier who had his origin in this castle, at one's side. You may stay."

I saw the rest of the party hasten by on their way to the platform.

Leaning against the wall with a beating heart, I waited for the moment when the sound of their steps should die away, that I might be able to distinguish what was said by these two who remained at the foot of the ruin.

At length I caught a few words. They were uttered by Gerhard in the impassioned tone peculiar to him, —

"I conjure you, Clothilda, not to fool with me any longer, there must be an end to this play. You do not know with what a disposition you have to deal."

"Possibly; but I know that you are said to be betrothed to a girl down there in the valley."

Breathless I awaited Gerhard's answer. It soon came. He declared with the most solemn assurances that it was not he, but his brother who was betrothed; that he had never loved any one before her; that the girl she spoke of was so simple that he could not for an instant think of marrying her, etc.

Gerhard actually succeeded in convincing this Clothilda that she was his first and only love, and that life without her would be a burden which he could not bear.

I heard Clothilda say in a somewhat unsteady voice that he should have her answer in the morning.

Those who had been up on the platform now returned, and they all went away.

I remained sitting in my corner, and repeated incessantly to myself, —

"How much alike were my mother's destiny and mine."

It was late when I returned to our valley, and yet I found only Aunt at home.

Uncle had ridden away in the afternoon, and had not yet come back. To go to rest before he was home, I could not. It was midnight when I saw a boat glide across the river; it was Uncle. With slow and weary steps he ascended the path which led from the shore to our dwelling.

I went to meet him with an oppressed heart. When he saw me he sighed deeply, clasped me silently to his breast, and murmured, —

"To-morrow, to-morrow we will talk together."

The night was long; but yet it had a morning.

At the first rays of the sun I was down in the saloon to wait for Uncle; but to my surprise I found him already there, walking restlessly back and forth. When I went in he stretched out his arms to me, exclaiming, —

"My poor child, can you forgive your old Uncle for all the suffering you are obliged to endure, for all the sorrow his sons have heaped upon your innocent head?"

I threw my arms around his neck and burst into tears.

When we had both calmed ourselves, Uncle told me that he had received a letter the day before which induced him to go to town in quest of Gerhard. A conversation had taken place between father and son with reference to the letter, the contents of which Uncle did not touch more closely.

Gerhard acknowledged to his father that he was in love with a young lady from Berlin, who was staying in Kreuznach with some relatives. He said that his future happiness and welfare depended upon Clothilda Wern; that was the young lady's name.

The father had, after this declaration of his son, forbidden him to return home. Uncle did not wish to have anything more to do with him.

In vain did I implore Uncle to forgive him. In vain did I declare that what had happened was the happiest for us all. The only answer of the irritated father was, —

"He shall never come under my roof. He has made himself unworthy to be called my son."

The day after this, Gerhard's things were sent to Kreuznach, together with the direction for him to draw a sum of money corresponding to the inheritance that he might expect after his father's death.

A week after this arrangement, we received the intelligence that Gerhard had left Kreuznach and gone to Berlin to marry Clothilda Wern.

A few weeks more and Gerhard was married.

Ever since the night when Uncle returned from Kreuznach, it seemed to me that his form had become more bent, his walk slower, and his hair more gray. It was as if his son's behavior rested heavily on his shoulders.

We read and walked together, just as before, but we were no longer glad; we were silent and sorrowful.

One day, it was towards fall, as he and I were sitting outside our dwelling and I read aloud, we heard quick steps approaching by the path which led from the river.

I looked up. Uncle also turned his head.

The steps quickened and came still nearer. The advancing guest was now at the turn of the path, and in a few minutes Rolf stood before us.

Our joy can be easily imagined.

In the first moments we had no mind for anything but the delight of seeing each other again. When this had somewhat abated and I could look at Rolf with tear-drenched eyes, his face seemed to me considerably changed.

The former mild and earnest expression had gone over to a stern one, and

there was something cold and hard in these features, which before spoke of so much goodness.

Life is a continual ebb and flow of joy or sorrow.

When the earth was again clad in the robes of spring, Rolf and I knelt before the altar, and the priest pronounced a blessing over our heads.

When we left the church we were one before God and man, and one in our hearts; so I believed, as with a heart full of the bliss love bestows I looked forward to the future.

Forgotten were the sorrows, griefs, and sufferings I had endured, and life seemed so bright and smiling.

Yet my happiness was a dream which was never to be realized.

In a few months after my marriage I perceived that the affection Rolf cherished for me was no longer the same as before. The calm, always warm-hearted Rolf had become uneven in disposition, sometimes hasty, and often unjust.

If I spoke of how dear he was to me, his brow became clouded, and he pressed a cold kiss upon mine, saying in a compassionate tone, —

"Poor child!"

If I caressed him, he pushed me gently from him with the words, —

"Your good heart, Selma, never denies itself."

If I tried to surprise him with something that I knew would please him, he said, —

"Thank you, Selma, you are an attentive wife, and do everything to fulfil your duty."

When I asked him why he was so changed, he looked at me and replied, —

"Selma, do not ask such questions, they do not become you. You know best yourself that we are both changed."

In vain did I exert myself to discover the reason of this lack of real warmth. I could not find it.

That his singular behavior did not come from extinguished love, I thought I could conclude from the fact that there were sometimes moments when he showed me an almost passionate tenderness; but even at these moments there was something painful in the expression of his face.

I suffered, without daring to complain; for I trembled at everything that could awaken his displeasure, because this was easily called forth, but hard to subdue. I feared his anger, whom in younger years I had never seen irritated.

Before we were married I had spoken with him about Gerhard, spoken frankly and unreservedly about my feelings. He listened to me in silence, and when I finished he said, —

"Selma, I will ask one thing of you."

"And that is?"

"That you promise me not to speak of Gerhard. It pains me severely to hear you talk about him, as you have now done."

It could of course not enter my mind after this request to speak either of Gerhard or of anything which had reference to him. Neither could it be supposed that Rolf's changed behavior had any connection with this; but I sought the cause of it elsewhere, without finding it.

Uncle, who never heard an unfriendly word exchanged between Rolf and me, considered us happy, and we carefully concealed from him that this happiness existed only in his imagination.

Gerhard had disappeared; he was not mentioned by any.

Rolf and I had been married two years, when I became the mother of a son, whose birth nearly cost me my life.

Never shall I forget the loving care with which Rolf tended me during my illness. In every look, every gesture, I read how I was loved; but when I became well again, he drew back, as if afraid of troubling me.

I cannot describe how bitterly I suffered from this; for I now missed his love so much the more.

If Rolf had not been a loving son and father, I might possibly have become reconciled to his hard, bitter, and passionate behavior towards me, for I should then have considered it as something belonging to his character; but when I thought of how he had formerly been, how he was to his child and his father, I found it unnatural that he should seem to deny his usual character to me alone.

Again a year passed. My little boy's birthday drew near; and as he was born on the same day as his father, I wished to celebrate this double anniversary by having a miniature painted of myself and enclosed in a beautiful locket together with a lock of my son's hair, and this present I intended to let the little one give his father.

I hoped through this gift from my child to gain an opportunity of bringing Rolf to an explanation, which should at last put an end to the tension between us.

I had taken several journeys into town for this picture while my husband was in Bingen. When he came home and learned from the servants that I had been to town several times, he reproached me for it with an anger which seemed almost inconsiderate.

He accused me of an utter lack of frankness, and declared that this fault of mine would lead to misery.

Without giving me time to defend myself, he went off after making all these charges.

This little scene took place on the morning before his birthday. At noon I received the locket with my picture by a messenger from the town.

Although the joy I expected from this gift was embittered through Rolf's injustice, I consoled myself with the thought that he would the next day, when he learned the reason of my journeys to town during his absence, make amends for his hasty words.

It drew towards night; but Rolf did not return.

I sat by my child's cradle, listening for the sound of his father's step.

Suddenly a hasty tread was heard approaching the door of our bedroom.

I sprang up to meet Rolf; but remained standing motionless, as if petrified. Before me stood Gerhard.

He was pale and looked disturbed. Frightened, I shrunk back.

The next instant he lay at my feet, entreating my forgiveness for what he had done.

He was miserable, — miserable because he had wished to promote my happiness, and for this object had represented himself to me as fickle and drawn down his father's anger and his brother's contempt. He had never loved any one but me; he loved me still with undiminished strength; and he had come once more to speak out the feelings of his heart and implore me to effect his father's forgiveness.

I promised to do what I was able if he would only go away, and I said that I would talk with Rolf; but then he entreated me in tears not to mention his name to Rolf until I had obtained his father's pardon. He conjured me by all that was holy, if I did not wish to make him perfectly miserable for his whole life.

In my anxiety lest he should not go, I promised him, and now for the first time he rose.

He remained standing before me. His look had something singular, and I felt quite frightened when he seized my hand and said, —

"Selma, I cannot depart, unless you are able to save me from the consequences of an act which I have committed under the burden of my unhappy marriage. I have gambled, Selma, and if I do not pay my debt to-morrow before noon, I am disgraced, my name branded, and with this all possibility of obtaining my father's pardon is gone. Selma, at this moment you have more than my

life, you have my honor in your hands. Will you save it?"

"If I can," I stammered, and requested to know the sum.

It amounted to just what I had that morning received from Uncle as my pin-money for the year, and which I had always since my earliest youth drawn on the first of July.

Without hesitating for a moment I hastened to give him the money, and he then left.

The night passed and also my son's and his father's birthday, without Rolf being seen.

In my anxiety I sent a messenger into town to find out if any accident had happened to my husband; but the man returned with the intelligence that he had left Kreuznach the previous afternoon and gone to Wiesbaden.

Late in the evening of the day in which I had hoped through the gift of my picture to effect some change in our constrained relation, he came home. I sprang to meet him, after the anxiety I had undergone, to throw myself in his arms; but he pushed me hastily from him, saying, —

"Spare us both the infliction of any demonstrations of affection. Where is my father? Has he been uneasy over my long stay?" And without waiting for an answer he hastened by me to find the old man.

It was very late when he entered our bedroom. I sat rocking my son.

His glance fell upon me immediately, and he frowned with anger as he said quite harshly, —

"Why have you not retired?"

"Because I wished to embrace you on your birthday and explain the reason why I went to Kreuznach during your absence. Ah, Rolf, it has pained me that I awakened your displeasure by so doing, when I wished to afford you, as I believed, a glad surprise."

"Indeed, you are very good!" rejoined Rolf bitterly: "and you know how to put your words so that one might be deceived by them. You are a formidable woman, Selma," added he, and turned away from me.

"Rolf," I exclaimed, "what is your intention in telling me this? What wrong have I done you?"

"What have you done?" repeated he, looking at me; "and you dare to ask that?" He drew an étui from his breast-pocket, adding: "You have not only betrayed the faith you owed me, even when you did not give me your heart, but you have recklessly thrown your honor and mine into the hands of a madman. Therefore take back the *souvenir* that you sent him; you can thank your husband for sparing you the humiliation of being in the mouths of all the idlers at Wiesbaden. I have for the present saved your honor and my own at the same time, but do not count upon my doing it again!"

He hastened towards the door.

"Rolf, Rolf, hear me!" But he did not listen; he was gone.

I went to open the étui. It was my miniature, enclosed in a locket, and exactly like the one I had had painted for Rolf. On the edge of the case stood, "From Selma to Gerhard."

Perfectly beside myself, I raised the lid of my chiffonier to see if my locket had been stolen; but no, it was there and was precisely like the one Rolf had thrown to me.

Although inexperienced in life's intrigues, I saw that it would be difficult to justify myself. The artist who had painted the miniature, and who was the only one who could testify that I had ordered but one likeness, had left Kreuznach the same day I paid him for it. He had also the care of the setting. There was thus no way of proving that I was innocent.

I lay awake and cried the whole night.

Rolf was away all the next day. He

only came home towards evening. I had seated myself on a bench outside our dwelling to force him to a conversation.

When he saw me his eyes flashed. I went to him, saying, —

"I demand of you, as a right-minded man, to stay and hear me. You have made a hard accusation against me, and you cannot refuse to let me give you an explanation.

In silence Rolf seated himself on the bench I had just left. He crossed his arms over his breast, as if he wished to indicate by this motion that he waited for what I had to say.

I sat down on the turf at his feet. With calmness I related that I had engaged a travelling artist to paint my miniature, which I intended to give him. I told him that the picture he had thrown to me was something of which I had no knowledge, and I asked him how it was possible for him to believe that I betrayed him in any respect."

When I finished, a deep sigh heaved his breast. Without looking at me, he said, —

"If I should believe you, how would you then explain the fact that Gerhard came in possession of this likeness? He has not stayed in Kreuznach, and did not know that you were going to have your picture taken. He has thus not been able to have any copy made, and besides, why should he do it?"

"Rolf! Gerhard has been in Kreuznach!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"Has he?" returned Rolf hastily; "and this you have known and concealed from me? Ah! you have perhaps met him when you went for a sitting. I suspected something of the kind!"

"O my God, Rolf, how you talk! Have I ever lied to you or deceived you?"

"Not that I can prove," answered Rolf, smiling bitterly; "there is really a great difference between concealing the truth and uttering a falsehood. Yet the deceit is just as great if I conceal the truth, as if I denied it. You have concealed that you met Gerhard, and you do not consider this a deception."

In spite of all the unjust charges he made me, I did not become angry. I only felt deeply troubled, and with the firmest persuasion that I could remove the misunderstanding between us, I told him of Gerhard's appearance and his request that I would try to induce his father to pardon him.

Rolf listened to me without once interrupting; but I read in his face with a feeling of despair that I had not succeeded in subduing the doubts in his soul.

I received during these agonizing moments the bitter lesson that when distrust and suspicion have gained a foothold in the heart, they remain there and are not so easily removed.

When my account was ended, Rolf stroked his brow with his hand, murmuring, —

"But the locket, how will you explain that? Yet, what use is it to talk of this? Were you guilty, you would deny it. I will believe that you are pure as far as your actions are concerned, although everything speaks against you."

He rose, adding with vehemence, —

"I must find out whether you or he deceive me, even if I should be compelled to travel around the earth to hunt up the artist who painted these portraits."

Rolf went in to his father.

In a few days my husband went away.

This journey was occasioned by a letter which came quite unexpectedly. That the cause was not pleasant, I could conclude from Uncle's sad appearance.

When Rolf kissed me in farewell, his expression was milder than it had been for a long time, and he looked me in the eyes, saying, —

"O, that I could believe in your affection!"

"You can, Rolf," I replied, and looked

up at him; "my heart, my whole soul and every thought, belongs to you."

He released me and sighed.

"You distrust my assurance. Rolf, is there then nothing in my glance, my voice, my actions, which tells you that I speak the truth?"

He looked long at me and kissed me once more, saying, —

"I will and shall believe you. You were worse than a Devil if you could deceive me with that expression of truth in your eyes."

Two weeks fled, and yet we could not expect Rolf back. He had written to Uncle. The contents of the letter seemed only to increase the sorrow that was apparent in the old man's face. I also obtained a few friendly lines from him.

The same day that Rolf went away, a letter arrived from Gerhard to me. This was followed by others, all written in an agitated and impassioned tone.

I made several attempts to lead the conversation upon Gerhard, when Uncle and I were alone; but the old man interrupted me abruptly, and I had never more than time to mention Gerhard's name before he hindered me from continuing.

Finally a letter came from Gerhard, in which he declared that if he did not hear from me within a week and learn whether his father had forgiven him, his despair would drive him to put an end to his life.

This letter arrived in the evening, after Uncle had gone to his own room.

I resolved to speak seriously with Gerhard's father the following day, without allowing myself to be deterred. I was just considering what I ought to say to the advantage of one who had been the cause of so much harm to me, when I heard steps in the saloon. I hastened to the door to open it, thinking that Rolf had possibly returned.

I was mistaken, it was Gerhard.

I became so frightened at the sight of him, that I almost uttered an exclamation; but he seized me quickly by the arm, whispering, —

"Make no noise, I must speak to you."

The scene which followed was such that it could only have been enacted by Gerhard.

He painted in the most glowing colors how unhappy he had been, and how deeply he loved me. He begged in tears that I would give him the consolation for all that he had suffered of seeing his father again.

He spoke with all the extravagance of feeling, and when I would have fled in my fright, he held me, still exclaiming, —

"One of the two, your love or my father's forgiveness must you give me."

"All that I am able to do to reconcile you with your father I will," answered I, and tried to get my hand loose. He let go of it, but at the same instant threw his arms around me, and with his eyes fastened on the door, exclaimed, —

"Beloved, adored Selma, you restore life to me in allowing me to hope."

Just then I looked up. Right before me on the threshold stood Rolf.

I uttered a cry of pain, and would have snatched myself from Gerhard's arms; but he held me tight as in a vice.

"Rolf!" exclaimed I, in despair. Now for the first time Gerhard released me. I sprang out into the saloon; it was empty. I fancied that I heard the sound of steps; I started out in the darkness to follow them, but then all became silent around me. The night was dark, I saw nothing. I listened, I called; no answer; and when I returned to the house, Gerhard was no longer there. All that had passed seemed like a dream.

How interminably long was the remainder of the night!

The morning came, but without shedding any light upon the night's occurrences. I came to the conclusion that

Rolf's appearance had been nothing but an illusion, and I now resolved to put an end to Gerhard's further appeals to me by speaking to Uncle and effecting a meeting between them. I knew that Gerhard was kept concealed by Aunt Monica in her room, until I had succeeded in influencing his father to allow him to show himself. Aunt had informed me of this in the morning.

My situation was painful in the extreme, through my fear that it was Rolf I had seen the night previous, and my anxiety lest he should return before Gerhard saw his father, or that I should not succeed in bringing about this meeting.

With my child in my arms I went to Uncle, after I had offered up a fervent prayer to the Madonna.

I began to speak of Gerhard.

Uncle tried to interrupt me as usual; but I continued, and described how unhappy his son felt at being rejected.

I begged forgiveness for his faults, and tried to prove that what he had done to me was of such a nature that it ought never to have excited his father's anger, so that he should forbid him to appear in his presence. I appealed to the father's heart, and put the question whether he would not feel happier in forgiving than in rejecting.

After Uncle had once or twice with a stern voice, but in vain, tried to interrupt me, he let me talk to the end. When I finished, he raised his head, which had been leaning on his hands, rose and went to the chiffonier, from which he silently took a letter and handed it to me.

It was from the judge of the district, and ran thus:—

"Esteemed Friend: I think that I have found the thief who stole the eight thousand thalers from your sister; but as I am fully convinced that neither you nor she will enforce the law towards the one who appropriated, them, when you learn that it is no other than your son Gerhard, I consider it best for you and your sister so to arrange the matter that no further search may be instituted. This will be very easy, if you immediately call upon me on receipt of my letter, when I will explain to you how I came to this discovery. However painful it has been to me to tell you this, I have nevertheless been compelled to do it, in order to spare you the humiliation of seeing your son indicted for theft.

"With undiminished respect and friendship,

"Signed, etc."

When I finished the letter, Uncle said in a steady voice, —

"It was this letter, not the intelligence that Gerhard had taken a fancy to his present wife, which occasioned my journey to Kreuznach. It was this letter which made me cast him off, and pay him all that he should one day inherit. I removed him from all contact with me; I did not curse him, because as a Christian I had no right to do it, but I will not see him. A thief is not my son; I shall never, mark, Selma, never allow him to cross my threshold or show himself before my eyes until he has changed for the better."

"But if he has done so, if he has repented, if — "

"He has not," exclaimed the old man, and struck his hand violently on the table.

"Papa, beloved papa, that is something you do not know," I replied.

"Alas, I know it too well. He has so acted towards me that I am almost ruined. On false orders, signed with my name, he has drawn money from all the merchants in Coblenz, Bingen, Kreuznach, etc., with whom I had dealings, and that to so great an amount, that your husband will only with difficulty be able to arrange matters so as not to occasion scandal. I have been obliged, in order

to cover my son's frauds, to sell my best vineyard; but not enough with this, the day before your husband went away, I received a letter from Gerhard's wife, in which she begged me for assistance for herself and her child. He has destroyed the little she possessed, and then abandoned her. This also will Rolf try to arrange, at the sacrifice of all he owns; but when this is accomplished, it is all that I can do for my degenerate son."

"No, not all," exclaimed a voice from the door, and Gerhard rushed in. He drew a pistol from his pocket and added with wild vehemence: "I must have two thousand thalers, or else I will shoot myself through the head before your eyes, my father!"

"Shoot yourself then," said the old man coldly, "from me you will not get a single thaler more."

I sat with my back turned to the door and had my child in my lap.

Gerhard started past me to his father, who was sitting opposite. When he threw himself at the feet of the latter, he lay with his back turned to me.

At Uncle's words he raised the pistol over his head. I rose hastily with a cry of horror. There was a report, a piercing shriek from my child, and I was covered with blood."

Here Frau Spindler paused and buried her face in her hands.

After a few moments the unhappy mother resumed.

The shot had reached my little boy in the breast. I held his lifeless body in my arms. Why I did not fall dead to the ground, I do not comprehend. Nature had given me so strong a frame, that I did not even lose my senses, but maintained the full consciousness of my terrible misfortune.

Of what occurred around me I have no recollection; I had but one thought, — that my child was murdered.

They told me that Gerhard fled from the room like a maniac.

Night came, without my knowing how the day had passed. At last they tore the little wounded corpse from my arms, to bury it in the churchyard. All that I had left of my child were his clothes steeped in blood.

The day after my little boy's burial, two letters arrived from Rolf, — one to the old father, who since the calamity had not left his room, and one to me.

Mark, this dreadful letter reached me two days after my child's terrible end.

Frau Spindler took from her pocket a letter yellow with age and stained with tears; she handed it to me, saying: —

Read it yourself, I have not strength to read it to you.

The letter ran: —

"Selma: When you receive this we are separated forever. You have yourself so desired it, and I go to free you from the presence of a husband whom you have deceived, and whose honor you have violated. I will not hate, not curse the mother of my child; but I say, Woe to the women who like you receive the purest, the deepest, and most faithful love of their husbands, and repay it with deceit and infidelity.

"I have long known that your heart was attached to him who is called my brother; I have known that your lips lied, when they spoke love to me; but I forgave the inconstancy of your heart, because it seemed to me that you were trying earnestly to conquer the feeling which bound you to him. Yet I was mistaken. You feigned faithfulness and love of duty in order to deceive me so much the easier; and I have still, after he gave me undoubted proofs of your faithlessness, allowed myself to be deluded by your words and to believe your assurances.

"I will spare myself the pain of convincing you that you have deceived me; you, the humiliation of standing as an adulteress before your child's father; and the old man, the sorrow of having in you nourished a serpent in his bosom. Therefore must we separate.

"This is not a punishment, but a necessity. Punish you, I cannot; and yet when I think how you cheated me in the last moment, I feel anger and rage boiling in my soul.

"What solemn assurances did you not give me when I was compelled to leave home, and what did I find at my return? My wife in my brother's arms!

"You saw me, Selma, and you understood that we saw each other for the last time. Had the old man, already so afflicted by sorrow, not lived, I would have sundered the bonds which unite us, taken my child from an unworthy mother, and carried it with me in my exile. Now I say, God preserve me from augmenting my father's grief! May he live in ignorance of the fact that one brother has robbed the other of his happiness; that the girl whom he fostered with so much tenderness has been treacherous to duty, conscience, and honor; this I desire with all my soul.

"I ought to have distrusted one who even at our first betrothal day deceived me and did not mention the amour she had entered into with my brother; but I loved, and I failed to see that duplicity was concealed behind the mask of innocence. You have punished me in a fearful manner for my credulity.

"See that you now, when you have separated the child from the father, the son from the old man on the brink of the grave, awake to the sense of what you owe your child and the one who brought you up. Remember, that you will be accountable to God for Rolf's son."

After I had read the letter, I handed it in silence to Frau Spindler, who resumed her narrative.

What to this moment I cannot understand is, why I did not become insane; but as I said, my *physique* was strong. I neither fell ill nor lost my reason. I remained with the full consciousness of my misery, and prayed with all the strength of my soul. I had not even tears to give vent to the depth of agony and despair within me.

Completely crushed, I sat hour after hour with this letter before me. I was thus not miserable enough through the terrible death of my child, but I needed this addition to my misfortune.

Towards evening Uncle sent for me. I had not seen him since my child was reached by Gerhard's bullet.

The summons from Uncle roused me from the trance of crushing grief in which I was sunk, and a voice in my heart whispered, —

"The old man, what shall become of him, he the father of my husband, and my child's murderer?"

The next moment I entered his room. He sat as usual in his easy-chair. His appearance was so changed that I fell at his feet and burst into tears.

With Uncle were Father Lorenzo and Aunt Monica.

Uncle clasped me tightly to his breast. None of us were able to speak, but our tears alone had to interpret all that we felt.

Father Lorenzo was the one who first broke silence. He spoke mild and loving words to us. He spoke as a Christian priest ought to speak to those deeply troubled.

The words fell like balm on the soul's wounds. The sobbing ceased, and at last Uncle faltered, —

"Can you keep from cursing the unhappy man?"

"Uncle, he is your son," was my answer.

In a few moments Father Lorenzo imparted to me the contents of Rolf's letter to his father.

Rolf informed him that in redeeming the notes Gerhard had made out in his father's name, he had expended all their ready money. Of all Uncle's property there now remained only the revenue from the little ground and the vineyard which formerly belonged to my parents. Still Rolf hoped that it would suffice for our support. He had resolved to go to the New World to endeavor to build up a fortune for himself and family, and in this way replace what his brother had squandered. The letter to his father was calm and loving. He begged him to take tender care of me and his son, and said in conclusion that he had long ago decided to go to America in order to make himself a rich man, and as such return home.

After this day, weeks and months of dreary sorrow followed.

No further letter was received from Rolf. We could not write to him, because we did not know where to address the letter.

Half a year after my child's death, we were met by a new misfortune. My uncle became blind. Another half-year, and he slumbered under the same turf as his grandson.

I was now alone with Aunt Monica.

A year had gone by since Uncle was buried.

Aunt Monica and I were sitting quite alone one long and rainy autumn afternoon in the room which had formerly been Rolf's and my bedchamber, when a man's step was heard in the saloon.

Aunt Monica took the light to see who it was. I went with her.

In the middle of the floor stood a man enveloped in a ragged cloak and with his hat, dripping with rain, pressed down over his eyes.

He carried something under his cloak. When the light fell on him, he threw off his hat and cloak. Gerhard stood before us with a child in his arms. It was a little girl apparently about two years old, although she was actually four.

At the sight of this man, who had robbed me of all, I shrunk back.

He spoke.

The words floated past my ears, without my comprehending them.

His wife was dead, he himself changed into a beggar, and branded as the murderer of his brother's son; his own child was without name and without bread. That is what he said, although I did not understand it at the time. It was for this child he prayed, — prayed to me, whom he had made childless. I caught his petition, but I was not able to answer or look up. Quite suddenly I felt myself embraced by a pair of tender arms, and a childish voice uttered in a beseeching tone, —

"I am freezing, I am so hungry; will you not be my mamma?"

In an instant my arms were around the child. I clasped her to my heart. This was my answer. When I looked up, Gerhard was gone.

The child is Louise. Since then I have not heard anything of Gerhard or Rolf.

I have tenderly loved the child the All-good gave me in compensation for what I had lost. I have for her sake abandoned our valley, over which rests a singular curse, which seems to make it impossible for happiness to bloom there.

Since Aunt Monica's death, ten years ago, we have resided in Berlin.

You have now heard the history that is attached to the house down there at the foot of the mountain, as you have heard the legend of Rheingrafenstein. Both are only new evidences of the truth that the greatest enemies of our happiness are our passions. It matters little whether we live in a cottage or in a palace, in the most solitary corner of the world or the largest of cities, if we do not, wherever we are, teach ourselves to govern

them, and to let reason, not feeling, decide upon our own actions and those of others.

Frau Spindler ceased and I also remained silent.

From the reflections into which we had sunk, we were roused by a voice, which beneath the ruins where we sat, sang, —

"Da droben sassen sie allzumal
Und zechten im alten Rittersaal ;
Die Fackeln glänzten herab von Stein
Und schimmerten weit in die Nacht hinein."

The voice was trembling and uncertain, but gave evidence that it had once been strong and melodious.

At the first strophe of the song, Frau Spindler started and rose quickly ; she looked around her frightened, and murmured, —

"Gretchen!"

I turned my head.

To the surprise of both of us we now observed that we were not alone on the platform. Behind us, at the edge of the ruins, sat a man.

When the singer came nearer, he rose, and I now recognized the Englishman who had followed Louise.

The one who sung now stood on the platform. It was an old woman. She stopped when she saw us three, and regarded Frau Spindler with a peculiar look, as if she was searching her memory. Then she smiled in a crazy way, nodded her head, and said softly, —

"You have done right to come here. Knight Eberhard and the fair Adelgunda have been waiting for you, and so has he." At this she pointed to the Englishman.

Frau Spindler's glance followed the woman's direction involuntarily. Her eyes and the Englishman's met. They looked at each other a full moment, and then she sprang to him, seized his arm, and exclaimed in a tone that resembled a cry of joy, —

"Rolf!"

He stretched out his hands to her, and she fell senseless in his arms.

The one who had borne such cruel sufferings, without her body taking the least share in them, now rested as if dead on the breast of her regained husband.

He pressed her to his heart, covered her face with kisses, and called her by the tenderest of names, until she again opened her eyes and twined her arms about his neck.

That afternoon the sun's rays fell with a more than usually mild light on Rheingrafenstein. Two faithful and hard-tried hearts were now found there, which beat for each other and sent up a fervent thanksgiving to the Supreme Being.

Gretchen returned quite contented down to the valley.

According to her supposition, the spirits of the beautiful Adelgunda and Knight Eberhard had again been united.

Two or three days after the above described occurrence, I was invited to Frau Spindler's rooms and presented to her husband, Rolf Spindler. We ate dinner together.

Joy shone from the eyes of the happy couple.

While we were drinking coffee, Rolf gave me some information with regard to Gerhard. How he had himself spent these fifteen years he did not relate, only that he had resided in the West Indies the greater part of the time, and had many difficulties to encounter before he was able to earn money ; but that things had gone so well with him for the last few years, that instead of possessing nothing, he was now a rich man.

A year ago he returned from the West Indies to England. He resolved, now that he had amassed a fortune, to go to Germany to see his son again.

While he was staying in London on

business, it happened one evening, as he was returning to his lodgings, that a carriage ran over a beggar who was just about to enter Rolf's gate. In his fall the beggar had received a cut in the head, and was carried senseless to the porter. A surgeon was sent for, and in the mean time Rolf and the porter tried to bring the poor wretch to consciousness.

When in these efforts they pushed aside the matted hair and washed his face, a shudder went through Rolf's soul.

He contemplated the features so ruined by dissipation and misery, but which, notwithstanding the stamp of moral degradation imprinted upon them, still retained their original regular beauty. Rolf recognized in the unfortunate man his brother.

This discovery was no sooner made, than he had him carried up to his own apartments, where he was tended with the greatest care. The injury he had received was, however, such that the physician gave no hope of his recovery. During the first twenty-four hours the sick man was in so lamentable a condition, that his pains entirely mastered him; for not only his head, but his breast also, was severely injured. On the third day he obtained some relief; and now Rolf revealed himself to his brother, who could not possibly recognize him, so changed was he, with his dark complexion and large beard.

When Gerhard learned from the doctor that he could not live, he declared his wish to confess, not to a priest, but to his deeply wronged brother.

He mentioned the accident which had cost Rolf's son his life; how the father from sorrow had first become blind and had then died. He further acknowledged that he had belied Selma in an abominable manner when he conveyed the idea to Rolf that she loved him (Gerhard). He confessed that he himself had had the miniature painted, in order to strengthen the likelihood that Selma's heart was his.

Led by an intense envy of his brother, Gerhard had a joy in embittering his life. When he discovered that he had made a poor affair in his marriage, he hoped by exciting Rolf's jealousy to occasion a break between Selma and her husband; this would draw upon Rolf his father's anger, something from which Gerhard considered that he should derive all possible advantage, especially as he had already, in the first year of his marriage, used up all he possessed.

With his wife he had not received more than a few hundred thalers. She had fooled him with the report that she had property. The little she inherited from her parents she had put an end to before her marriage.

Gerhard had formed his plan upon the knowledge of his father's character, and the certainty that the latter would never forgive Rolf if he made Selma unhappy. He had therefore tried, through all possible means, to excite Rolf's jealousy, and unhappily succeeded but too well in his efforts.

There is generally no more thankful task than to touch our egotism. It is always ready to come into activity.

After Gerhard had confided his child to Selma's care, he went to sea, and then sank deeper and deeper, until he became what he now was.

He had learned by accident that Rolf was in London, and was just on the point of seeking his brother to obtain some assistance when he had the misfortune to be run over.

After Gerhard died, Rolf went to seek his wife. He found out, with much difficulty, that she was residing in Berlin. He directed his course there, but was then met by the intelligence that she was in Kreuznach.

He came to this place, and resolved first to observe Selma incognito.

When we went to Rheingrafenstein, he had followed us unobserved there, to make himself known to his wife. He had thus been a listener to her narrative.

Two days after the one in which we dined together, the Spindler family left Kreuznach. They intended first to take a journey to France, and then to settle down in England.

THE END

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